

Israel arrests five for alleged Hamas fundraising

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli police announced Monday that four Palestinians from Arab east Jerusalem and a deputy mayor had been arrested on charges of raising funds for the Islamist group Hamas. The five men are accused of transferring funds to Hamas members jailed by Israel and their families via a finance company operating in Ramallah, Arab east Jerusalem, and the Arab Israeli town of Um Al Fahm. Those arrested included Suleiman Eghbariah, deputy mayor of Um Al Fahm. Mr. Eghbariah and two other suspects were due to be presented later Monday at a remand hearing, while the two others will go before a judge on Tuesday, police said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

Gingrich says Congress would consider Israeli aid

TEL AVIV (R) — The U.S. Congress would consider an Israeli request for \$1 billion to help offset potential security risks from the transfer of more land to Palestinian self-rule, U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich said. "I think on an emergency basis, I'd certainly consider it. If we get a peace agreement, most Americans are going to want to be supportive and helpful," Mr. Gingrich said in an interview published by the daily Ha'aretz on Monday. Israeli media say that during a visit to Washington this month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the need for \$1 billion to help pay for bypass roads and other security measures throughout the West Bank. The United States gives Israel \$3 billion in economic and military aid each year, more than any other country receives.

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King, Queen attend 52nd independence anniversary



(Photos by Yousef 'Allan)

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor yesterday attended a major celebration held at the Al Hussein Youth City to celebrate Jordan's 52nd independence anniversary and accepted congratulations from some 3,500 people assembled there. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Princes and Princesses and Royal

family members also attended the celebration, held by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

Addressing the audience, Dr. Majali said Jordan's independence has crowned the tireless efforts made by the Jordanian leadership "to ensure our right to a decent life." Dr. Majali said the struggle of the late King

Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, led to Jordan's independence, despite the modest resources.

Also attending the celebration were the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, the Royal Court chief, the King's advisors, former prime ministers and senior

military and civil officials.

On the occasion, the Royal Court received a number of cables addressed to King Hussein from Arab and foreign heads of states, congratulating the King on the occasion and wishing Jordan further progress and more achievements under his leadership.

Prince Abdullah leads arrest force

Suspects in Shmeisani, Rabia slayings arrested

Ochi was target of Rabia slayings, Sa'ad of Shmeisani, others were killed only because they happened to be there

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Five Jordanians accused of killing 11 people in January and April were arrested, a sixth was killed during a shoot-out with police forces, and a seventh is still on the run, the minister of interior and police said yesterday.

Nathir Rashid said that the government will demand the extradition of the seventh suspect who is still at large in a European country, without naming the suspect or the country where he resides.

Mr. Rashid made the announcement hours after police successfully pursued two of the suspects who fled to Sahab where they took refuge in a house. A Special Forces unit led by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, assisted by a police squad, exchanged fire with the two men which resulted in the death of one suspect and the injury of a policeman. The second suspect, who also sustained injury according to witnesses, surrendered after 10 hours.

Mr. Rashid said the suspects confessed to the slaying of eight Iraqis in a luxurious villa in Rabia on January 17 and the killing of three prominent Jordanians in Shmeisani on April 8.

He added that the "gang" was also responsible for the killing of one of their members in Wadi Al Seer on April 16.

Mr. Rashid told the Jordan Times that the four other suspects had been arrested in the past few days.



A member of Jordan's Special Forces stands guard as other policemen arrest one of the suspects in the recent murders of 11 people, on Monday (AFP photo)

He added that the motive behind the murders was purely "financial," putting an end to numerous rumours that linked the murders with foreign countries.

"The two crimes had no political motive. They were not linked with foreign parties. Both were committed on financial grounds," the minister said.

Mr. Rashid explained that Namir Ochi, the Iraqi businessman murdered during the Rabia incident, was the target of the suspects.

"Primary investigations indicated that Ochi received antiquities and other things from the gang and did not pay for them, so they decided to kill him," the minister said.

Mr. Rashid said that the

other victims, including the Iraqi charge d'affaires Hikmat Hajou, his wife Laila Sha'aban, three other Iraqis and two Egyptians, were murdered because they incidentally were at the scene of the crime.

Also according to the minister, the killing of well-known lawyer Hanna Nadeh, his son Suhail and psychiatrist Awni Sa'ad, was targeting only the latter for "financial reasons."

"The gang arrived at Sa'ad's clinic and killed him. But unfortunately Mr. Nadeh and his son arrived at the scene and were immediately killed by the gang," the minister added.

"Following the two crimes, the gang decided to kill one of their members who was working as a taxi

driver," Mr. Rashid said.

"The gang is nothing but professional killers who committed their crimes in a well-organized way," he said.

The minister added that the arrest of the fifth suspect yesterday will reveal more information on the link between the two crimes.

Describing the arrest, Mr. Rashid said that two of the suspects were chased by police for several hours late on Sunday before they took shelter at a house in Sahab early on Monday.

One of the two, Jamal Omar Yousif Al Jaghabeen, was killed during the shoot-out with police while

(Continued on page 7)

Arafat to snub Gingrich over his support for Jerusalem occupation

Erekat says Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, UAE and Qatar agreed to attend Arab summit

Agencies

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat is unlikely to meet U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich to protest his support for Israel's occupation of Jerusalem, a Palestinian official said Monday.

A meeting between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Gingrich was scheduled for Wednesday. But Mr. Arafat will most likely cancel it because Mr. Gingrich expressed his support for moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Gingrich arrived in Israel on Saturday and on Sunday attended Israel's celebration of its victory in the 1967 war and its occupation of Arab east Jerusalem.

The U.S. Congress passed last year a non-binding resolution calling for the U.S. embassy to be moved to Jerusalem. However, the Clinton administration blocked the move.

In Jericho, top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat slammed Mr. Gingrich on Monday as "ignorant," accusing him of undermining peace with his support of hard-line Israeli policies.

"This man is absolutely ignorant of what is happening here, and his words and actions reflect this," Mr. Erekat said of Mr. Gingrich, who is due to meet President Arafat on Wednesday.

"He does not know anything about the issues or the sensitivities here. He is more extremist than most Israelis. What he says and does undermine the forces of

peace on both sides," Mr. Erekat told AFP.

The Israeli press reported that Mr. Gingrich, who has been in Israel since Saturday to join celebrations for the country's 50th anniversary, had requested that Mr. Erekat not be allowed to attend his meeting with Mr. Arafat.

Mr. Erekat said no such request had been received from Mr. Gingrich. "But it was not planned that I attend the meeting in any case," he said.

Mr. Gingrich was reportedly angered by comments made by Mr. Erekat

(Continued on page 7)

Weizman calls on Netanyahu to accept troop withdrawal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman called Monday on the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reach agreement quickly with the Palestinians on the transfer of further West Bank land to self-rule.

Speaking after meeting with a delegation of U.S. congressmen, Mr. Weizman said failure to end the 14-month deadlock in peace negotiations with the Palestinians would lead to violence.

(Continued on page 7)

Israeli businesses accuse PNA of implementing 'boycott' threat

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli business leaders accused the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on Monday of organizing a boycott of Israeli products in Arab east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce said Palestinian officials were forcing shop owners to withdraw all Israeli products not obtained through agents approved by the PNA.

"The Palestinian (National) Authority has moved from threats to action and forced products to be withdrawn from shops, particularly in east Jerusalem," Danny Gillerman, the Federation's president, said on Israeli radio.

"This is a boycott which violates all the economic accords reached between Israel and the Palestinian

(National) Authority," Mr. Gillerman said. No reaction was immediately available from the PNA.

Mr. Gillerman called on the Israeli finance ministry "to intervene vigorously to stop these practices."

"With 100,000 Palestinian workers coming to work in Israel and the 1.5 billion dollars which Israel transfers each year in taxes to the Palestinian (National) Authority, we also have the means at our disposal of putting on pressure," Mr. Gillerman said.

The businessmen were responding to an order issued by the Palestinian ministry of economics and trade demanding that foreign businesses use licensed agents to distribute products in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel launches settlement campaign on Golan Heights

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli authorities put 380 new settlement-units on sale Monday in settlements on the occupied Golan Heights, territory Syria demands be returned as the price for peace, officials said.

The new units are located in 14 settlements on the strategic plateau for bargain prices beginning at around \$47,000, far below the cost of similar housing in other parts of Israel.

State financial assistance in the form of low interest loans and grants could cover up to 95 per cent of the purchase price for some buyers, local officials said.

Yehuda Wollman, head of the Golan regional council, said the housing campaign was designed in

part to change the demographic balance on the Golan where 13,000 Israelis currently live alongside 15,000 Druzes who lived there before the territory was captured by Israel in the 1967 war.

"Of course we ask the government for aid from time to time to create a different demographic situation on the Golan Heights," Mr. Wollman said on Israel Radio.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria have been on hold for more than two years, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejecting Syrian demands the talks be resumed on the basis of an Israeli agreement in principle to return the Golan Heights in exchange for a peace treaty.

U.N. team inspects 12 sites in Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said a special team of U.N. biological inspectors left Baghdad on Monday after making surprise visits to 12 sites in the capital and the south of the country.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said the inspectors from the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction searched 10 health sites in Baghdad and Dhi Qar and Waset provinces in the southeast.

Another group inspected two more health locations in Meisan and Dhi Qar provinces

in the south by using helicopters. INA, quoting an official Iraqi source, said the biological team left Baghdad on Monday after completing its work.

Visiting teams come to Iraq on special missions decided at U.N. headquarters in New York. It has often been their intruding activities that raised Iraqi hackles.

The U.N. permanent monitoring teams based in Baghdad have made surprise field visits to more than 4,000 sites since it began its work in 1994.

Iraqi FM heads for New York for talks on disarmament

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sa'ad Al Sahhaf left for New York on Monday for talks with the United Nations on the whole disarmament file which Iraq wants closed, the official news agency INA said.

Mr. Sahhaf, who accompanied by a team of technical experts was to travel through Amman, is to hold talks with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

The technical meeting is due on Thursday and will cover all aspects of UNSCOM's work. U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said last week.

A U.N. source in New York said that Baghdad, which accuses UNSCOM of deliberately holding up the lifting of sanctions, requested the meeting.

Solution to peace process deadlock in Arab hands — Syrian vice president

CAIRO (AFP) — Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam said in an interview published Monday that the solution to the deadlock in the Middle East peace process was in Arab hands.

"We have to be convinced that the lifebuoy is Arab and the only way to recover our rights and achieve peace is by the Arab road," Mr. Khaddam told the Egyptian government daily Al-Ahram.

"We must convince ourselves that the current situation

is harmful for us all and that there is not one Arab country capable of protecting its interests. Protecting these interests must be comprehensive," Mr. Khaddam said.

He stressed that Syria "is ready to resume negotiations" with Israel but only from the point at which they broke off in 1996.

"The [current] Israeli government must respect what the Rabin government agreed to. If these conditions are met then Syria is ready for peace,"

Mr. Khaddam said.

He specifically referred to "an agreement we reached" with assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Syrian territory and to the June 4, 1967 borders.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said over the weekend that Israel will never return to the 1967 borders and has refused to acknowledge any agreement which Rabin may have struck with Syria.

Israel warplanes attack Hizbollah targets in Lebanon

SIDON (AFP) — Israeli warplanes staged a raid on a stronghold of Hizbollah militia in southern Lebanon on Monday, police said. There is no immediate report of casualties.

A fighter-bomber fired missiles at 7:20 a.m. at a hilltop in the Qazraa area in the Iqlim Al Tuffah region, a cluster of Shiite Muslim villages east of this southern port city, police said.

Five minutes later, another warplane fired a missile on nearby Sujud, police added.

In Jerusalem, an Israeli military spokesman confirmed that Israeli planes had carried out a raid on Lebanon on Monday. The planes hit their targets and returned safely to base, the spokesman said.

On Sunday, Israeli warplanes launched two waves of air raids on the Iqlim Al Tuffah after attacks by the Shiite militia on the Israeli-occupied border zone in southern Lebanon.

The Israeli air force has carried out 23 series of raids into Lebanon this year, mostly against the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah which spearheads the guerrilla war to force Israel out of southern Lebanon.



An Israeli police officer pushes back a Palestinian woman Monday in front of a house in the Old City of Jerusalem that Jewish settlers claim their own. Israeli police, acting on a court order, evicted the current Palestinian occupants of the house, causing tempers to flare (AP photo)

Jewish settlers evict Palestinian from house in Arab east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Jewish settlers backed by Israeli security forces evicted a Palestinian woman from her home on Monday in order to seize a house they claimed to have bought in Jerusalem's Old City, witnesses said.

The settlers, accompanied by a force of Israeli border guards, ordered Naila Al Zerou, 40, out of the house in the Old City's Muslim Quarter where she lives with her 17-year-old son, and threw her possessions out into the street.

"They came in while I was asleep this morning. I hardly had time to wake up before they were ordering me to get out," Ms. Zerou told journalists.

Several dozen settlers occupied the house, which is adjacent to a number of other houses which have been occupied by an ultra-nationalist group, Ateret Cohanim, which seeks to expand the Jewish presence in the Old City.

The settlers, who carried a court-issued eviction notice, claim to have bought the house, which Ms. Zerou said her family had rented for the past 30 years.

Ms. Zerou said settlers had previously seized the house in 1986, but she had won an order from the Israeli supreme court in 1992 ordering them to leave.

"We've been renting here for 80 years. You mean to tell me we're not protected? This is not just a matter of my house. They are trying to take all of Jerusalem house by house," Ms. Zerou said.

The settler move comes a day

after Israel marked "Jerusalem Day," with tens of thousands joining a military and civilian parade to commemorate Israel's 1967 occupation and illegal annexation of the city's eastern sector.

During the celebrations, several dozen nationalists marched through Arab areas of Old City to emphasize Israeli sovereignty over the entire city, sparking scuffles with Palestinians.

Ziyad Abu Ziyad, a representative for Jerusalem in the Palestinian legislative council, slammed Monday's eviction as "racism by the Jews against the Arabs."

"This is the strong using the language of force against the weak. Israeli laws are only for Jews, they don't apply for Arabs," he said.

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The settler move comes a day

EU draws fire for 'Arab bias'

By Martin Walker

FOR THE first time, European Union foreign ministers are being subjected to a professional pro-Israeli lobby, American-style, as the new Brussels office of B'nai B'rith takes up the cudgels on behalf of exports to Europe from the West Bank and other occupied territories.

The EU plans to stop giving the usual market access to goods labelled as coming from Israel originating in the occupied territories. The decision is part of a wider plan to increase the economic viability of the

regions run by the Palestinian Authority.

"This is another attempt by the EU to throw its weight around unfairly in the Middle East," Tommy Baer, the international president of B'nai B'rith, said. "The EU wants a place at the negotiating table but is prejudging the outcome of the peace talks by this measure."

The issue, sharpened by EU allegations of "widespread and persistent fraud" in the export of Israeli oranges to Europe, will be put to the vote today, when the 15 foreign ministers meet for the regular Council of Min-

isters session.

B'nai B'rith, one of the leading lobby groups for the Jewish community and the Israeli cause in the United States, with long experience of influencing U.S. policy, decided this year that Europe was sufficiently influential in the Middle East — and one-sided towards the Arab cause — to be worth lobbying.

Its impact in Europe, where national Jewish communities are far less organised and vocal than in the U.S., remains to be seen.

From The Guardian

Uproar over planned appearance in Knesset by U.S.-Israeli right-winger

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Left-wing Israeli politicians protested on Monday against a planned appearance in parliament of an Israeli-American professor who compared former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to a Nazi collaborator.

"A man who has taken such a stance does not have the right to hold a meeting nor to gain access to the chamber of parliament," Eli Goldschmidt, the opposition Labour Party whip in parliament, told AFP.

Robert Loewenberg, president of the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies based in Jerusalem and Washington, is due to

address a meeting on anti-missile defence Tuesday in the Knesset chamber.

Mr. Goldschmidt, along with the leader of the secular left-wing party Meretz, Yossi Sarid, has demanded that Mr. Loewenberg be barred from the meeting.

Mr. Loewenberg, who is a fierce critic of the autonomy agreements signed between Israel and the PLO, reportedly compared Mr. Peres, one of the architects of the accords, to Israel Kaszner, a Hungarian Jew found guilty in 1953 of collaborating with the Nazis during World War II.

Mr. Loewenberg also accused

the assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of using the methods of a "police state" against his opponents.

Tuesday's conference was being organised by Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Silvan Shalom and was to be attended by the visiting speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Republican Newt Gingrich.

A spokesman for Mr. Shalom said he invited Mr. Loewenberg to the conference on the recommendation of the professor's institute.

"Shalom does not know this man and has never spoken to him," his spokesman said.

Jewish settlers concerned about Christian TV move to West Bank

TEL AVIV (AP) — Citing concern about missionary activity, Jewish settlers leaders said Monday they were worried about tentative plans by a TV station owned by U.S. evangelist Pat Robertson to move to the West Bank settlement of Ariel.

Middle East Television, a subsidiary of Mr. Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, has been broadcasting from Israel's self-declared buffer zone in southern Lebanon. METV's fare mainly consists of Christian programmes, reruns of U.S. sitcoms and sports.

METV has been looking for a new location because of growing talk about an Israeli troop

withdrawal from Lebanon. Rudi Kol, a CBN spokesman, said Ariel was one of the sites being considered, but that the broadcasting company also had offers from Jordan, Cyprus and the autonomous Palestinian areas to move there.

The Jewish Settlers' Council said Monday it was wary about METV moving to Ariel, the second largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

"Some Christian groups have engaged in missionary activities," said Judith Tayar, a spokeswoman for the council.

"Young Jews, especially if they are not religious, are sometimes susceptible to their

approaches," Ms. Tayar said the council would examine the matter further. She would not say whether settlers leaders would try to block a move by METV to Ariel.

Mr. Kol said METV never tries to proselytize. He said Christian religious programmes are never broadcast in Hebrew and the English ones have no Hebrew subtitles.

The head of the Ariel Development Foundation, Dina Shalit, said Ariel would welcome METV. "The future of Ariel lies in attracting hi-tech enterprises and this certainly includes telecommunications and broadcasting," she said.

Tehran mayor barred from leaving country — daily

TEHRAN (AFP) — Tehran Mayor Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, charged with corruption, has been banned from leaving the country to attend a conference on urban administration in Tokyo, a newspaper reported Monday.

The conservative Quds daily said all exit points in the country had been informed last week of the move against the embattled mayor, who is to stand trial shortly in connection with a corruption scandal in the city government.

The paper said Mr. Karbaschi, a moderate close to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, had planned to visit several other countries after the four-day conference in Japan, which it said will start on Tuesday.

The head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, confirmed Wednesday that the popular mayor will be tried for corruption after the authorities complete their investigation.

He did not give a date for the trial but said the investigation into Mr. Kar-

baschi and three other suspects was continuing. "The court will settle it and issue the ruling like other cases," Ayatollah Yazdi said.

The conservative-dominated judiciary has been investigating the mayor for several months.

Mr. Karbaschi's imprisonment in April provoked an unprecedented political crisis, and he was released on July 12 days later after the Islamic Republic's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, intervened.

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JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10Cartoon — "Pro Stars"
15:30Small Talk — "Quiz Show"
16:00Drama — "Bordertown"
16:30Doc. — "The Health Show"
17:00Route of Capricorn
18:00French Programmes — "Les Coeurs Brules"
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme — "Fratales"
19:30News headlines
19:35Step by Step — "Midnight Caller"
20:00What Would You Do?
20:30Drama — "Rhodes"
22:00News in English
22:30Feature Film — "The Lottery"
23:59Metro Cafe
00:30End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

03:56Fajr
05:28(Sunrise) Duha
12:32Dhuhr
16:13Asr
19:37Maghreb
21:09Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Sweetfield, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweetfield Tel. 5920146
The Ulaite Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
It will be relatively warm with temperatures rising further and winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.
Amman14/33
Aqaba20/38
Deserts11/35
Jordan Valley18/37
Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 29, Aqaba 33. Humidity readings: Amman 21 per cent, Aqaba 43 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Jbali740740
Dr. Walid Al Masri5675485

Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab758848
Dr. Mahmoud Amir888888
Al Asema pharmacy4637055
Al Salam pharmacy4636730
Yacoub pharmacy4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy4632660
Nairoukh pharmacy4623672
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qann281484
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh982799
Khalifeh Pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre771111
Civil Defence Department563111
Civil Defence Emergency4630341
Rescue Police 1924621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade467101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5603810
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery592199
The Islamic Abdi5661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644381/6
Al-Jalal Maternity4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen7771013
Al-Bashir7751112/6
Army, Marka891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital5602240/50

Amal Hospital5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990999
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)1275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nufes Hospital(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Damascus (RJ)
07:45Sanaa (RJ)
08:15Aqaba (RJ)
10:20Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:50Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:05Cairo (RJ)

18:30Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:00London, Frankfurt (RJ)
Other Flights
13:00Riyadh (SV)
13:30Aden (YY)
14:25Munich (LH)
15:00Istanbul (TK)
18:05Kiev (6U)
18:30Dubai, Damascus (EK)
19:00Paris (AF)
20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10Beirut (ME)
21:40Aden (YY)
23:35Larnaca (CY)
23:40Amsterdam (KL)
00:55Bucharest (RO)
03:00Rome (AZ)
04:25London (BC)

ROYAL WINGS (RW) FLIGHTS

10:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
19:20 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
23:25 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Aqaba (RJ)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait allows Sudanese diplomat back

KUWAIT (AP) — A Sudanese diplomat has begun working in Kuwait, Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail said Monday, in a sign that the rift between the two countries is closing. The Sudanese embassy has been shut since the 1991 Gulf war that ended Iraq's seven-year occupation of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti Embassy in Sudan remained open, operated by a charge d'affaires. Mr. Ismail said he agreed with his Kuwaiti counterpart, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, that the level of diplomatic representation between their countries should be gradually increased.

Israeli army tears down stands in West Bank

MASHA (AFP) — The Israeli army removed a strip of roadside stands owned by Palestinian stone-workers outside a Jewish settlement on Monday, witnesses said. An army bulldozer, accompanied by some 50 soldiers, demolished 15 roadside stands owned by Palestinians to carve and sell decorative stone building materials near the West Bank village of Masha, south of Nablus, they said.

Journalist's appeal of jail terms rejected

CAIRO (AP) — A court Monday rejected an Egyptian journalist's appeal to suspend a six-month jail sentence for libeling a legislator and pro-government newspaper writer. Lawyers for Gamal Fahmy, managing editor of the now-defunct Al Dustour newspaper and a reporter for the weekly newspaper Al Arabi, brought no new evidence to justify suspension of his sentence, the appellate court ruled. The defamation case was brought by Tharwat Abaza, a ruling party member of Parliament's upper house and noted writer. Fahmy was accused of writing in Al Arabi that Abaza's father was a British sympathizer during Britain's occupation of Egypt.

Rival Iraqi Kurdish groups to hold talks

CAIRO (AFP) — Senior officials from Iraq's feuding Kurdish factions are to hold talks here this week on the sidelines of a conference on "Arab-Kurdish dialogue," the organisers said Monday. Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) deputy leader Sami Abdul Rahman both arrived here Monday at the head of delegations of about a dozen. "There will be a meeting on the sidelines of this conference between the KDP and PUK delegations," said a member of the Egyptian organising committee Mohammed Al Samra.

Home M

Jordan's inde point in the A

AMMAN (R) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Fayyad said Monday that Jordan's independence was a point in the history of the Arab region that should be respected and protected. He said the independence of Jordan was a point in the history of the Arab region that should be respected and protected. He said the independence of Jordan was a point in the history of the Arab region that should be respected and protected.

New funerals provide low

AMMAN (R) — The funeral of the late King Hussein was held in Amman on Monday. The funeral was attended by a large number of dignitaries and officials. The funeral was held in a large hall in Amman. The funeral was attended by a large number of dignitaries and officials. The funeral was held in a large hall in Amman. The funeral was attended by a large number of dignitaries and officials.

Journalist released

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what's going on

AMMAN (R) — A meeting was held in Amman on Monday. The meeting was attended by a large number of officials. The meeting was held in a large hall in Amman. The meeting was attended by a large number of officials.

JORDANIAN NATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL

AMMAN (R) — The Jordanian National Song Festival is being held in Amman. The festival is a celebration of Jordanian music and culture. The festival is being held in a large hall in Amman. The festival is a celebration of Jordanian music and culture.

EXHIBITIONS

AMMAN (R) — A number of exhibitions are being held in Amman. The exhibitions are a celebration of Jordanian art and culture. The exhibitions are being held in a large hall in Amman. The exhibitions are a celebration of Jordanian art and culture.

Jordan's independence a 'turning point' in the Arab region — Majali

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Monday said Jordan's independence was a turning point in the history of the Arab region that marked the beginning of serious endeavours under the reign of the founder of the Kingdom, the late King Abdullah, toward progress and overall development.

Speaking on the Kingdom's 52nd anniversary of independence, Dr. Majali said the occasion is a reminder to Jordanians of the major achievements accomplished under His Majesty King Hussein's reign in a atmosphere

marked by democracy and respect of human rights. Dr. Majali said his government is going ahead with the policies charted by King Hussein and is committed to the democratic process as part of efforts to meet the higher national objectives.

The past 52 years of independence have witnessed progress in Jordan, earning the admiration of the world despite the numerous challenges and dangers posed to the nation, he added.

On independence day, Jordan renews its pledge to support the Palestinian

people's struggle for freedom as Jordanians remember the great sacrifices that the Jordan Armed Forces offered in defence of Palestine in the 1948 and 1967 wars.

In remarks on the occasion, the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srour, said Parliament takes pride in the numerous achievements of the past 52 years.

Jordan's parliament over these past years has been an embodiment of democratic freedoms in Jordan, which he said represents an oasis of stability in the midst of a turbulent region.

New funeral home aims to provide low-cost service

By Mohammad Ben Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The "Burial House," a newly launched Islamic charity that will take care of deceased Jordanians from the minute their heart stops beating until they are laid to rest at relatively cheap rates, formally opens its doors in June.

The service aims to ease the plight of impoverished families who often have to borrow money to pay for burial costs, which can exceed JD150.

It also helps families who cannot deal with the shock of having to wash the bodies of the dead and wrap them in white cloth before they are buried in line with Islamic Shariah teachings.

"Our services include transporting the corpse, washing it, keeping it at the morgue until the burial and issuing a death certificate and a burial permit," charity

director Ahmad Fares told the Jordan Times.

"The cost of all of these services will not exceed JD90," he added.

"Few people know how to wash the dead according to Islamic Shariah regulations and this gave us the idea to launch the project," Mr. Fares said.

"We hope to expand our services to reach the whole country, but that depends on the success of this project."

The house is set over a 3,000 square metre plot of land in downtown Amman, making it accessible to most people.

"It will be able to accommodate over 100 people and fifty cars at any single moment," Mr. Fares explained.

An annex could be added in the future to help the bereaved family receive condolences if their homes are not spacious enough to accommodate the three-day

function.

"We are in the process of establishing a fund to offer free help to the poor to bury their dead," he added.

"But this depends on donations we get."

The General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS), a major supporter of the project, is urging people to make contributions.

Hind Agha, a Jordanian woman who passed away last month, donated JD100,000 to cover about half of the construction costs, Mr. Fares said. GUVS provided the rest.

"Unfortunately, she was unable to witness the opening."

The Greater Amman Municipality leased the plot of land housing the charity for 20 years at a nominal rate.

Several private sector agencies have been set up in the last several years to offer such funeral services but at much higher costs.

Crown Prince to inaugurate UNRWA services centre for Palestinian refugees

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hassan today will inaugurate a services centre in Waqqas, a northern Jordan Valley village home to over 15,000 U.N.-registered Palestinian refugees.

The centre, fully funded by the United States, will be the first UNRWA-run project offering central and integrated health and social services outside camps hosting Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) runs ten camps across Jordan housing 20 per cent of the 1.5 million U.N.-registered Palestinian refugees who were forced to flee to the Kingdom after the 1948 and 1967 wars with Israel.

In addition, there are three other camps in Jerash, Russeifa and Shallalah that are not officially recognised as UNRWA establishments but have large concentrations of Palestinian refugees.

The United States contributed \$400,000 to fund the compound while the

Waqqas municipality allocated the plot of land on which it is situated.

"The compound will accommodate a health point for primary health services, a women's programme centre, a kindergarten and a community rehabilitation centre," Gunar Lofberg, director of UNRWA operations in Jordan, told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

"The Waqqas project is the first of its kind at UNRWA and it carries the message that the agency and the major donors like the U.S. are keen on improving the conditions of Palestinian refugees not only in camps, but outside camps as well."

The project will provide services in properly planned and constructed installations, "instead of being spread out in unsuitable rented premises as is the case today," he said.

"On many occasions, the government leased land from landowners for UNRWA's use to accommodate and serve Palestinian refugees," Mr. Lofberg added.

The day-to-day affairs of the camps are run by the

Jordanian government through the Department of Palestinian Affairs while UNRWA offers health, education and relief services in line with the U.N. mandate that set it up after the 1948 war.

Wesley Egan, U.S. ambassador to Jordan, told reporters on Sunday that Washington's support for UNRWA has been longstanding.

"This has been proven by the fact that we are the largest single donor, providing 25 per cent of the agency's entire annual budget," he added.

Funding for the Waqqas project, which will also help residents of neighbouring villages, came from the American Fund for Peace Implementation Program Projects, set up following the signing of the Washington Declaration of Principles that led to the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

The United States has so far provided \$4.7 million for projects in the region, including Waqqas village.

"This amount is in addition to our annual contribution to UNRWA's central budget which is over \$70

million a year," Mr. Egan told the Jordan Times.

UNRWA looks after 3.5 million Palestinian refugees living in camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The future of refugees has been reserved for final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Other items on the agenda include the issue of Arab east Jerusalem, borders and settlements. The talks are to be completed by May 1999.

"The question of refugees is a critical one with respect to the final outcome of the peace process and to the states of the region who currently host Palestinian refugees," Mr. Egan said.

UNRWA's proposed total budget for 1998 stands at \$342.9 million in cash and in-kind funding.

The United States tops the list of UNRWA's 20 major donors, followed by the European Union, which contributed \$55 million and Japan, with \$19.8 million.

With a \$55 million deficit, UNRWA faces one of the toughest times in its 49-year history. The financial problems have been worsened by a rapid refugee popula-

tion boom that is putting massive strains on its health, educational and relief services.

Inflation, stagnant or declining donor contributions and increasing demand for agency services have worsened the situation.

UNRWA's commissioner general, Peter Hansen, due to visit Jordan later this week to attend a donor conference that begins on Thursday, has warned that any reduction in services would increase hardship among refugees and cause an outcry that could have destabilising consequences.

"When it comes to core base programmes, it is very difficult to make cuts and prioritise areas in which cuts have to be made," Mr. Lofberg stressed, adding that "UNRWA alone cannot take such a decision. This has to be done by the host governments, donors, UNRWA and the beneficiaries."

Mr. Egan said an announcement would be made during the meeting "on how the United States will help respond to the agency's annual deficit in 1998."

Rational finance system 'essential' for health sector restructuring — ministry

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Health and Medical Care Monday opened a four-day workshop on controlling the national health system's finances and conducting demographic surveys throughout the country to determine the general public health situation.

A system to regulate the finances of the public health sector is needed to help the ministry formulate a comprehensive health care plan for all Jordanians, said Taher Abul Samen from the ministry's planning and projects department.

In the opening address delivered on behalf of Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi, Dr. Abul Samen said the ministry is going ahead with plans to forge a partnership between the private and public health care sectors as part of

restructuring the Kingdom's health services.

He said it has become essential to create a rational system for financing health services, raising the efficiency of health workers, controlling the cost of health services and improving the management of health-related information.

This project, which is being financed by the United States Agency for

International Development, is bound to yield good results eventually since it will enable the ministry to have access to detailed information about the Jordanian health sector in general and the types and cost of services offered to the public, he added.

Dr. Abul Samen said the project is one of the ministry's priorities, especially as it is now involved in

developing and implementing a national health insurance system.

Taking part in the workshop are representatives of the Royal Medical Services of the Jordan Armed Forces, the Jordan University Hospital, and a number of health organisations in Jordan, as well as participants from Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, and Harvard University in the U.S.

Journalist released after three-day detention

AMMAN (J.T.) — Al Arab Al Yawm journalist Jihad Mansi was released Sunday after security forces detained him for three days on charges of "attacking the government in public," he told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Mansi said that he was detained by the General Intelligence Department and

that "during the investigation, I kept denying the charge."

"Then they dropped it," he said. "They treated me well, and the dialogue between us was good. They even apologised to me."

He said the Press and Publication Department had nothing to do with his deten-

tion.

Mr. Mansi, who is in late twenties and covers local issues for Al Arab Al Yawm, was detained last Friday on an order from the Security Court. The editor-in-chief of Al Arab Al Yawm, Saleh Qallab, said then that his arrest was not related to his work at the newspaper.

Tourism minister announces entrance fees to Madaba to be reduced

MADABA (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji on Monday said the ministry has prepared an integrated plan to overcome obstacles facing the tourism industry and deal with an expected boom in the year 2000.

Speaking during a visit to Madaba, where he inspected tourist and archaeological sites, Mr. Biltaji said the ministry is developing Christ's baptism site on the Jordan River and is carrying out a JD1.3 million project financed by the European

Union at the Um Al Rasas religious and archaeological site east of Madaba.

He noted that Um Al Rasas, which features the remains of a church with mosaics, will witness the construction of a resthouse and a public garden for the benefit of visitors.

Mr. Biltaji, who was accompanied on the tour by several deputies from the Madaba governorate and Madaba Governor Nashat Majali, said many of Jordan's numerous

archaeological and tourist sites are awaiting marketing at the domestic and international levels.

Restoration and development of sites, he added, is bound to attract more tourists and yield social and economic benefits to the local community. The Council of Ministers recently endorsed a set of regulations governing the work of tourist guides and the profession, including the restoration of sites and the creation of archaeological reserves, said the minister.

The ministry is planning to reduce entrance fees to the religious and archaeological sites in Madaba in a bid to further encourage Jordanians to visit.

The governor and the Madaba deputies submitted a number of requests to Mr. Biltaji and briefed him on their governorate's needs to promote the tourism industry.

They asked that a new tourist centre be built and sufficient area be assigned as a parking lot for tourist buses, among other facilities.

what's going on

FILMS

* "Never Say Never Again (James Bond 007)" at the British Council, Jabbal Amman at 7:00 p.m. (Also screening children's film entitled "Touchdown on Button Moon" on Wednesday, May 27, at 6:00 p.m.)

JORDANIAN NATIONAL SONG FESTIVAL

* Performances of Jordanian songs at the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday May 27-29 at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "The Arab Economic Options" (in Arabic) by Dr. Isma'il Sabri Abdullah at Abdul Hameed Shorman Foundation, Jabbal Amman on Wednesday, May 27 at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* "Graphic — Oil on Paper" exhibition by Guider Triki at Darat Al Fann, Jabbal Weibdeh. (Tel. 4643251/2), until June 25.

* Works by Christian de Portzamparc at the University of Jordan, until June 4.

* Paintings by Abdul Aziz Al Hasak at Hanamounabi Art Gallery, Gardens St. (Tel. 5536098), until May 26.

* Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Elad Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darat Al Fann, Jabbal Weibdeh, until May 28. Also displaying works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Bashi entitled "A Suite of Heads," and works by contemporary Arab artists.

New AIDS treatment offers hope for patients, but at a price

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The latest medical breakthroughs for AIDS treatment have brought hope for many patients worldwide, but in Jordan, the costly new medication remains out of reach for the majority of victims.

Antiretroviral therapy, a combination of three drugs — AZT, DDI or DDC, and Indinavir — can help delay the evolution of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, doctors said.

"Studies have indicated the clinical benefits of the triple combination therapy: there is an increase in the number of years these patients are living and their quality of life has improved," said Hana Arjan, product specialist at the local drug agent of the U.S. giant Merck Sharp and Dohme.

But in a country of 4.5 million people with an annual per capita income of JD1,400 a year, the new therapy, at a cost of \$32 a day, is proving too expensive for most.

Officials say the Ministry of Health, which offers basic health care to hundreds of thousands of Jordanians, cannot find enough cash to subsidise antiretroviral therapy.

"Patients find difficulties in paying the high cost of such treatment," said internist Jamal Wadi, a consultant on infectious diseases. "In Jordan, we do not have one recognised body to provide this medicine to HIV patients gratis or at

subsidised prices," he told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

"We prescribe this medication to patients in Jordan, but they have to buy it at their own expense," Dr. Wadi said.

In the past, the cost of AZT and DDI treatment, the ministry's off-and-on supply of medical stocks, ranged between \$400 to \$500 a month.

An HIV carrier must take the triple combination therapy every day for the rest of his/her life.

A patient is started on the new therapy if his/her CD4 cell count (the white blood cell count in the blood), drops below 400.

"These medications improve a patient's quality of life and delay the stage at which a patient shifts from being an HIV carrier to having full blown AIDS," stressed Dr. Wadi.

The first case of AIDS in Jordan was discovered in 1986. Since then, a total of 174 AIDS cases have been registered, according to Sa'id Kharabsheh, head of the Directorate of Disease Control and Prevention at the Ministry of Health.

The triple combination therapy entered the region in 1996, with Lebanon as well as oil-rich Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates offering it to HIV carriers at subsidised prices.

"Since this treatment is not subsidised in Jordan, patients cannot afford to buy it," said Dr. Wadi. "Some medications, such as AZT, DDI and DDC, are not even found on a regular basis in the Kingdom."

Ms. Arjan said she was aware of two people in Jordan who were relying on their own funds to buy the drug therapy.

Dr. Wadi said a few of the HIV carriers he has treated were able to buy the triple combination therapy at their own expense.

"But in doing so, they spent all of their resources," he said. "Some patients get their medicine from charitable communities in France and other European countries who sponsor them," Dr. Wadi added.

Ms. Arjan said the local agent of the therapy was selling the drug at cost.

"It is brought in on a humanitarian basis, which means we make no profit on sales but since patients have to buy it themselves, the majority do not have access to it."

The cost of the daily treatment is further increased by other medication required for "opportunistic infections," which may occur in the lungs and brains of HIV/AIDS victims.

Many have to spend days and even months in the hospital due to such infections.

With the triple combination therapy, "the immune system of a patient is built up, he/she starts to feel better, puts on weight and spends less time in the hospital," Ms. Arjan explained.

HIV/AIDS treatment worldwide is now following the motto of "hitting early and hitting hard" through the early detection of the virus and using the triple combination therapy introduced in 1996.

The therapy became stan-

dard treatment for HIV patients all over the world this year, Ms. Arjan said. In the early 1980s, AZT was developed as an AIDS treatment.

Studies then indicated that AZT interfered with certain cellular functions of the replication of the virus.

The new therapy has a powerful effect on HIV, helping reduce plasma HIV RNA viral load (the amount of virus in the blood) below detectable levels and increase CD 4 cells.

Local physicians have approached the Ministry of Health to underline the importance of the new therapy, but the response was not encouraging.

According to Dr. Kharabsheh, also member of the National Committee for AIDS Prevention and Control (NCAPC), blood transfusions were responsible for 28 of the total AIDS cases in Jordan.

"The vast majority of these cases were discovered in Jordan after patients had blood transfusions abroad or when the infection had been sexually transmitted to them abroad," he said.

Most of Dr. Wadi's AIDS patients range from young patients in their early 30s to those in their 70s who contracted the disease as a result of surgery abroad.

In a conservative country which shuns AIDS patients, the majority of victims suffer in silence, hiding news of their infection from even their families.

Doctors are worried the country is not doing enough to educate its citizens about

safe sex and ways of preventing AIDS.

"People look at the social stigma of HIV/AIDS and do not look at it as a medical problem," Dr. Wadi.

"After talking to patients and their families, I realised that people have such a dis-

and basically know nothing

about protecting themselves against it," he added.

Officials say there is a dire need to provide a support system for HIV/AIDS patients and their families to help them cope with AIDS.

"We try to control the disease, but we cannot control the social stigma that AIDS

protocol for the treatment of HIV/AIDS cases in Jordan," said Dr. Kharabsheh.

"There is a definite need for an effective and active support system for AIDS patients. They are human beings who are entitled to medical care. It is not a disease. It is a condition free or subsidised."

AL AMAL NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR PROMOTING AWARENESS ON CANCER AND EARLY DETECTION

As part of a nation-wide campaign aimed at raising public awareness about cancer and the importance of early diagnosis, a team of specialised doctors and the director of the Health Care Programme at Al Amal Centre will carry out a host of activities throughout the various governorates of Jordan between May 26 and July 9, 1998.

The programme includes the following activities:

- 1- Informing people about cancer, its causes, danger signs, prevention, early diagnosis as well as treatment.
- 2- Promoting awareness about the health care programme and the advantages of joining this programme at Al Amal Centre.
- 3- Carrying out tests for women wishing to undergo early detection for breast and skin cancer.
- 4- Carrying out tests for men wishing to undergo early detection for prostate, testicle and skin cancer.

The 12-day campaign will be implemented in accordance with the following programme:

Tafleh	Tuesday	May 26
Aqaba	Wednesday	May 27
Maa'n	Thursday	May 28
Jerash	Thursday	June 4
Irbid	Thursday	June 11
Ajloun	Tuesday	June 16
Irbid	Thursday	June 18
Mafraq	Sunday	June 21
Madaba	Tuesday	June 30
Balqa (Salt)	Thursday	July 2
Zarqa	Tuesday	July 7
Karak	Thursday	July 9

Lectures and early diagnosis sessions will be held

For women: At the family planning clinics from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
For men: At the local chapters of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Prior appointments for early diagnosis should be arranged by contacting the above mentioned parties.

For further information or enquiries about the lectures venues and early diagnosis centres, please call GUVS chapters or the Health Care Programme at Al Amal Centre, Tel. 5355535 - 5353000.

أمانة العمل

Kohl narrows gap with SPD four months ahead of vote

BONN (R) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who has made a career of death-defying political comebacks, has cut the gap with challenger Gerhard Schröder after his party rallied behind him last week, pollsters said Monday.

With four months to go to September's election, the Forssa and Emnid polling groups said Mr. Kohl picked up a badly needed lift at the Christian Democrats (CDU) Party Congress in Bremen.

Pollsters said Mr. Kohl, who has been trailing Mr. Schröder for months in his bid for a record fifth term, also benefited from fresh doubts about Mr. Schröder's authority over the Social Democrats (SPD).

Party leaders in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt defied Mr. Schröder recently to form a government relying on the support of the reform Communist party of Democratic Socialism (PDS).

Forsa, in a survey of 1,971 voters conducted last week, found the CDU gained two points to 37 per cent while

the SPD slipped two points to 43 per cent.

Emnid's poll showed the CDU gaining two points to 37 per cent and the SPD steady at 43 per cent.

The gains were the first solid upturn for Mr. Kohl's CDU since February and the SPD lead is now at its narrowest point since March. Mr. Schröder has led Mr. Kohl by up to eight points in many leading polls over the last two months.

"The big question is whether this is the start of a turnaround and whether the CDU will have enough time to catch up," Manfred Guellner, research director at Forsa, told Reuters.

"My best guess is that it is not yet a turnaround. The next three to four weeks are critical for the CDU. To have a chance to win in September, they are going to have to pick up at least four points by late June."

Mr. Guellner said Mr. Kohl's 1994 comeback rally had its roots at a similar party congress in Hamburg. But he said it took three months after the February 1994 congress for Mr. Kohl to catch up to the SPD and another few months to pull

ahead.

"It's questionable whether there is enough time for a comeback this time," Mr. Guellner said.

The pollster said the SPD had been hurt in the past week by a damaging discussion over whether the SPD in Saxony-Anhalt should form a coalition with the PDS.

Voters were less bothered by the Communist-supported government than by the fact that Mr. Schröder's will was ignored.

"It showed Schröder was weak," Mr. Guellner said. "A lot of voters ready to abandon the CDU and moving towards the SPD were frightened away by that. It looks like the old SPD with its leadership fights rather than Mr. Schröder's SPD."

Mr. Guellner and Pollster Dieter Walz from Emnid said the CDU's recent upturn had little to do with U.S. President Bill Clinton's two-day tour of Berlin and Eastern Germany with Mr. Kohl.

The CDU has based much of its campaign on portraying Mr. Kohl as a respected statesman. But the pollsters said Mr. Clinton's praise for

Mr. Kohl had only helped the chancellor in an area where he already scores well and doesn't need any help.

"A bounce after a party congress is quite typical and these gains were to be expected," said Mr. Walz.

"But two days of backslapping at a party congress aren't going to be enough for more than a small bounce. Voters are looking for more, such as positive signals in the economy and falling unemployment."

Mr. Walz said the SPD had little upside potential because it had already attracted most of the stock of potential floating voters. He said undecided voters could still give the CDU a 10-point boost.

"The race is still far from over," Mr. Walz said.

The Forsa poll put support for the Free Democrats, junior partners in Mr. Kohl's coalition, down one point at four per cent. Support for the environmentalist Greens, who want to form a coalition with the SPD, rose one point to six per cent.

The PDS was steady at six per cent in the Forsa survey.



Popular pro-democracy activist Emily Lau flashes victory signs as Allen Lee, chairman of the Liberal Party, looks on after Ms. Lau won a seat in Hong Kong's first elected legislature under Chinese rule. Lee lost his seat, marking a rebuke to Hong Kong's pro-China club (Reuters photo)

Hong Kong government facing clamour for greater democracy

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's Beijing-approved government must brace itself for demands for more rapid democratic reform after massive support for pro-democracy parties in the first election under Chinese rule, analysts said Monday.

The pro-democracy camp is expected to get about half of the popular vote in the direct election of the legislature, in which a record 53.29 per cent of the registered electorate cast their ballots.

Despite the strong support, the democrats are only likely to get a quarter of the seats under the present electoral system. Forty seats were decided by pro-business functional constituencies and an Election Committee packed with Beijing supporters.

"The Hong Kong SAR (government) is likely to face more pressure for a faster pace of democratic reform," said Sonny Lo Shiu Hing, associate professor of politics and public administration at the University of Hong Kong.

"In the past it was argued that the people were politically apathetic. It is now clear they are no longer apathetic and that will have to be taken into account," he said.

Kenneth Chan of the Baptist University said the pace of democratisation is likely to become one of the most controversial issues for debate in the 60-seat Legislative Council.

"If exit polls are reliable, with almost two thirds of the popular vote going to the pro-democracy groups, that has significant implications for the pace of democratisation," he said.

But Mr. Chan added that early statements from chief executive Tung Chee Hwa's administration indicated resistance to speedier reforms.

Mr. Tung welcomed the high election turnout as a victory for Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong.

But in comments seen as a gentle rebuff to the democrats, he cited Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, which sets out a gradual timetable for greater democracy with no final date for universal suffrage.

Under the law, the number of seats slated to be returned by direct election in the next poll increases by just four, a pace of reform democratic parties see as too slow.

Democratic Party Chairman Martin Lee said the record turnout gave "a clear message to our leaders in Beijing that Hong Kong people want and deserve democracy."

"This is a mandate ... and we will take the message and do our best to push for full democracy in Hong Kong in the next legislative council elections in the year 2000 and push for a democratically elected chief executive," he added.

China's official media gave quiet approval to the election, but made no mention of the strong pro-democracy support.

The official English-language China Daily front-page photograph of Mr. Tung emptying a ballot box above a report emphasising the record poll turnout.

Academics said the surprisingly strong voter turnout also showed the growing maturity of party politics in Hong Kong, which are seen as playing an important part in future democratic development.

"For the first time we witnessed strong party mobilisation in getting people out to vote," Mr. Chan said.

Mr. Lo added: "We have definitely seen our political parties maturing and their identities becoming stronger."

Academics said as more seats are democratically elected, the legislature will increasingly need to form political alliances with major groups to make their views known.

EU foreign ministers launch into packed agenda

BRUSSELS (R) — European Union foreign ministers met Monday for regular consultations on issues as diverse as the Kosovo crisis to the spectre of a nuclear arms race in the Indian subcontinent.

The ministers will also discuss progress in the EU plan to enlarge its membership by taking in former Communist states to the east in the next decade and the wrenching internal changes needed to bear the financial strain of expansion.

In addition, trade relations with the United States, the stalled Middle East peace process and an EU code of conduct on arms exports are on the busy agenda.

The start of autonomy talks in Yugoslavia between the government of President Slobodan Milosevic and Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority appears to have taken little of the urgency out of the Kosovo crisis.

EU ministers must decide whether now is the right time to implement or freeze a ban on investments to Serbia.

The EU and the United States are still intent on persuading Mr. Milosevic to accept international mediation, which they believe is needed for any meaningful dialogue.

In addition to Kosovo, EU ministers are expected to send a message to Mr. Milosevic on Montenegro's junior partner in the Yugoslav Federation whose reformist President Milo Djukanovic is under political pressure in Belgrade in what looks like another Balkan crisis in the making.

Mr. Djukanovic, who is due to visit Brussels Tuesday, can expect further political endorsement and support from the EU together with ministerial backing for free and fair elections.

Relations with Turkey have been put on the back burner at the meeting after Ankara said it would boycott a planned association council meeting with the foreign ministers to protest at being left out of the EU's expansion project.

The EU ministers are also expected to reiterate condemnation of India's nuclear weapons tests and to urge Pakistan not to follow suit.

The situation in Indonesia following the resignation of President Suharto and the worsening drought in Sudan are also in their bulging dossier.

interesting picture. I cannot tell you where this situation is going to lead to."

Viktor Orban, the chairman of the Fidesz party speaks during the press conference at the election headquarters in Budapest (Reuters photo)

Fidesz-MPP has also been offered the support of the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP), which became Sunday the first far-right party to win parliamentary seats since World War II. It will have 14 MPs.

Mr. Orban has kept his options open — including possible alliances with the Smallholders, or even a grand coalition with the Socialists.

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Both the Socialists and Fidesz-MPP are also keen to further develop the country's market economy but Fidesz-MPP has promised quicker and more spectacular growth, even better than the 4.4 per cent last year.

Under the Hungarian constitution, a new parliament must convene within 30 days of the second round of voting, namely by June 23.

Taleban anti-vice department upgraded to ministry

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's ruling Taleban militia Monday announced that their powerful and feared religious police department has been upgraded to full ministerial status.

Radio Shariat announced that by order of supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Department for the Prevention of Vice and Fostering of Virtue has raised its battle against un-Islamic conduct and appearance.

"This promotion has been given because our affairs are the most fundamental and powerful," explained the anti-vice number two Mawlawi Alhaj Qalamuddin, who becomes deputy minister.

Mr. Qalamuddin told AFP the current anti-vice boss Mawlawi Mohammad Wali took up the portfolio of minister, adding the promotion is an "important step."

"This is a lofty organ and has been promoted according to its status which is to hold the people accountable," the turbanned and big-bearded deputy said.

Famed for their anti-vice patrols, the so-called religious police have operated independently from other security organs since their introduction to the capital after the Taleban takeover in September 1996.

Falling directly under the authority of Mr. Omar, the department has been responsible for fundamen-

tally altering the appearance of Kabul's once-liberal population.

Based in the now-defunct and Soviet-style ministry of statistics building, the anti-vice squads tour the city in Japanese-made pick-up trucks mounted with loudspeakers that blast out Muslim sermons.

The speedy patrols ensure that men have not trimmed their beards, have suitably short hair and do not wear Western fashions. Inadequately covered women also receive on the spot punishment, usually a quick whip with a rubber hose.

The teams also enforce bans on television and video, music, women travelling unaccompanied by a male relative, high-heeled shoes, photography, outdoor weddings and the celebration of non-Islamic holidays.

Ministerial changes announced also include the renaming of the ministry of religious affairs to Haj and religious affairs, while two separate departments have been merged to form the new ministry for refugees and martyrs.

The Taleban hold two-thirds of Afghanistan and have imposed what they say is a model Islamic state.

Last year the militia renamed Afghanistan as an "Islamic Emirate" under the leadership of Mr. Omar who is known by followers as the Amir-ul Momeneen (leader of the faithful).

Georgian leader proposes federation for breakaway region

TBILISI (AFP) — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze sought Monday to avoid an all-out war with Abkhazia by offering the breakaway region the status of a state within a federation.

In a radio broadcast, Mr. Shevardnadze said the offer was conditional on an immediate ceasefire and the return of tens of thousands of refugees who have fled the recent fighting in Abkhazia.

"We are proposing that Abkhazia be given the status of subject of a federal state," Mr. Shevardnadze said.

"In exchange, we demand an immediate ceasefire and the return of the 25,000 to 35,000 civilian refugees forced to flee the region in the past few days," he said.

Mr. Shevardnadze's offer came as separatist forces in Abkhazia claimed to have killed around 100 Georgian militiamen in clashes at the weekend.

The fighting has fuelled fears that a five-year truce between the two sides is set to collapse.

An AFP journalist on the Georgian-Abkhaz boundary said clashes were continuing Monday morning.

Mr. Shevardnadze said the compromise offer had been deemed necessary to avoid a full-blown war, but at the same time stressed that Tbilisi would not grant full independence.

"Georgia will not accept the loss of Abkhazia," he said.

The new fighting, focused on Abkhazia's Gali region, has pitted Abkhaz forces against the "White Legion" — a militia group made up of Georgian volunteers.

"It was a difficult choice not to send regular troops, but it was felt that could lead to a new war," Mr. Shevardnadze said.

Abkhazia effectively secured independence in August 1993 after defeating Georgian troops at the end of an almost year-long war which left about 7,000 people dead and forced thousands of civilians to flee to Georgia.

Tbilisi still officially rejects the notion of a sovereign Abkhazia, according to it instead the status of an autonomous region.

Mr. Shevardnadze announced that Georgian Interior Minister Kakha Targamadze and Foreign Minister Menagharishvili would leave Monday for Abkhazia to negotiate the new proposal.

He also accused Russian troops deployed in the region of violating their peacekeeping mandate, and allowing separatist forces to bring heavy weapons into the U.N.-monitored ceasefire zone.

Russian troops make up the majority of the 1,500-strong force from the Commonwealth of Independent States that patrols the 12-kilometre wide zone that runs along the Inguri river that separates Georgia and Abkhazia.

Mr. Shevardnadze also condemned the Abkhaz separatists for targeting ethnic Georgians living in Abkhazia.

"It is impossible at the end of the 20th century for the international community to condone a policy of ethnic cleansing," he said.

Japan and Russia 'must put emotion aside to solve island row'

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan and Russia must put emotion aside to resolve a territorial dispute that has lingered since World War II by the agreed deadline in 2000, Moscow's ambassador said Monday.

"We need a political decision to solve the problem and we really have to prepare it," Russian Ambassador to Japan Alexander Panov told a luncheon meeting with business executives and reporters here.

"A special atmosphere is needed" to solve the territorial row, which has prevented the two countries from signing a peace treaty since the end of World War II, the

ambassador said.

"If public opinion in each country does not change, parliament cannot ratify," he said. "Putting aside emotion, we have to concentrate on practical issues."

Russia's political and economic stability would be also prerequisite for the signing of a peace treaty by a 2000 deadline set by Moscow and Tokyo, Mr. Panov said.

"We cannot deny possibilities that we can sign a peace treaty by 2000 as a feeling towards Japan has improved in Russia for the past year," the ambassador said.

"But no-one knows the

answer," he said. "We are at a very delicate moment."

President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto agreed at a summit in Siberia in November to do their best to solve the Kuril Island row and sign a peace treaty by 2000.

The dispute is over four Kuril Islands north of Japan which Russia occupied at the end of World War II and Japan wants to recover.

Mr. Hashimoto reportedly proposed to Mr. Yeltsin when they met in Japan last month that a potential solution was to treat the four islands as if they were within Japan's borders but without formally declaring

Japan had sovereignty.

At a Group of Eight summit meeting in Birmingham earlier this month, Mr. Yeltsin said he would respond to the Japanese proposal when Mr. Hashimoto was to visit Moscow in September.

The Russian ambassador called for Japan and Russia to step up cooperation in energy projects as part of their joint efforts to secure stable energy supply to Asia.

"Russia is the only country which holds enormous energy sources in the region," he said. "Putting Russia's energy and Japan's technology together would be good for the region."

Democrats biggest winners

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Democratic Party led by Martin Lee emerged Monday as the biggest single party in Hong Kong's legislature following the first elections under Chinese rule.

The party won 13 seats on the 60-seat legislature and will be joined by around seven other pro-democracy candidates, official figures show.

The second biggest party after Sunday's elections is the pro-Beijing Liberals with 10 seats, although unlike the Democrats they failed to win any of the 20 directly-elected seats in the 60-member chamber.

The pro-democracy candidates won 15 of the 20 directly-elected seats.

The democratic camp will still be in the minority in the Legislative Council, a fact it attributes to a biased electoral system. The party won about 50 per cent of the popular vote while Liberal Party leader Allen Lee lost his seat.

Third with nine seats were the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment (DAB) of Hong Kong.

The DAB, along with the Liberals, independents not seen as democracy advocates and smaller parties will dominate the new legislature.

Apart from the 20 directly-elected seats, 30 members were elected in occupation-based "functional constituencies" with a limited franchise and 10 by an Election Committee.

Hungarian right faces tough talks after poll victory

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Hungary's newly elected ruling party began potentially tricky talks on forming a new centre-right coalition Monday after ousting the ruling Socialists in run-off ballots.

The Fidesz-MPP party's 34-year-old leader Viktor Orban appears likely to have to team up with a nationalist party whose advances he has repeatedly rebuffed, after his victory by a narrow margin Sunday night, analysts said.

The bitter Smallholder pill must be swallowed," said the liberal Magyar Hirlap daily, referring to the rightwing Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) which won 48 seats in the 386-seat parliament.

Mr. Orban's rightwing Federation of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP) won 148 seats in the 386-seat parliament against 134 for the Socialist Party (HSZP) of outgoing Premier Gyula Horn.

Analysts say it is unlikely that Mr. Orban will form a "grand coalition" with the Socialists, and the Fidesz-MPP leader has said he would personally find such an alliance "inconceivable" although he has not ruled it out.

The Smallholders therefore seem his only acceptable ally.

His leader Jozsef Torgyan is known for his fiery anti-Communist, nationalist rhetoric in parliament, calling for harsher measures against Hungary's neighbours over their treatment of large Hungarian minorities.

Fidesz-MPP is far more moderate in its demands and its discourse, committing itself to European Union and NATO integration.

interesting picture. I cannot tell you where this situation is going to lead to."

Viktor Orban, the chairman of the Fidesz party speaks during the press conference at the election headquarters in Budapest (Reuters photo)

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United Nations honour guards at the UN carry remains of what are believed to be Korean war (Reuters photo)

North Korea of American

WASHINGTON — North Korea's new leader, Kim Jong-il, has been described by some as a "new American" in the sense that he is a young, charismatic leader who has taken power in a country that has been isolated from the world for decades.

Kim Jong-il, who is believed to be in his late 20s or early 30s, is the youngest leader in North Korea's history. He is also the first leader to have been educated in the West, having studied in the Soviet Union and the United States.

Some analysts believe that Kim Jong-il's rise to power marks a turning point in North Korea's history, as he is seen as a more open and reform-minded leader than his father, Kim Il-sung.

However, others believe that Kim Jong-il is a puppet of the Chinese, and that his policies will be dictated by Beijing. They argue that North Korea's isolation and lack of democratic reforms will continue under his leadership.

The situation in North Korea remains uncertain, with reports of human rights abuses and a lack of transparency in the government's actions.

Ugali dismissed claim over poli

THE POLICE dismissed a claim by a group of people that they had been kidnapped by the police and taken to a secret location.

The group, which was led by a man named [Name], claimed that they had been taken to a secret location and held there for several days. They said that they had been treated badly and that they had been forced to do hard labor.

The police denied the claim, saying that they had no knowledge of any such incident. They said that they had been working to maintain law and order in the area and that they had not been involved in any kidnappings.

The group's claim has caused a stir in the community, with many people expressing concern about the safety of their families. They are demanding that the police investigate the claim and that the group be released.

The police have promised to look into the matter and to provide information to the community as soon as possible.



United Nations honour guards at the border village of Panmunjom between the two Koreas carry remains of what are believed to be two U.S. soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean war (Reuters photo)

North Korea returns remains of American soldiers

PANMUNJOM, Korea (AFP) — North Korea Monday handed over the remains of two American soldiers killed during the Korean war in a ceremony supervised by the United Nations Command (UNC).

The remains contained in metal caskets were turned over to UNC honour guards following a visual inspection by two U.S. officers who represented the U.N. command.

The ceremony was held in the truce village of Panmunjom, the only contact point in the demilitarised zone. U.S. troops guard the southern half of the truce village under the U.N. flag.

U.S. army chaplain Captain Gary Kurr held a brief prayer after covering the caskets with blue U.N.

flags. The remains had been recovered in north Pyongan province between April 21 and May 14.

"We thank you God for the dedication, valour and the service that was rendered by our fallen comrades," he said.

It was the first joint operation between North Korea and the United States to take place this year. The two sides recovered the remains of seven U.S. servicemen in joint exhumations from September 1996 to November last year.

The handover was to have taken place on May 15, but was delayed for 10 days because of a sudden demand by Pyongyang that the U.S. Department of Defence replace U.N. soldiers with U.S. troops when repatriating the remains.

At the time, the North broke with past practices and failed to show up at a planned ceremony, accusing Washington of breaching an agreement on joint operations to discover the remains of U.S. servicemen killed in the 1950-53 war.

The North also demanded that the U.S. Defence Department send a delegate to receive the remains at Panmunjom.

Previous transfers of the remains of U.S. soldiers have been made without problems through Panmunjom, despite Pyongyang's refusal to recognise the supervisory function of the UNC.

North Korea wants a bilateral peace accord between Washington and Pyongyang to replace the 1953 armistice, bypassing Seoul.

Kigali dismisses Kenyan police claim over politician's murder

KIGALI (AFP) — The Rwandan government Monday dismissed a claim by Kenyan police that prominent politician Seth Sendashonga was murdered in Nairobi to settle a score over stolen millions of dollars.

Rwandan Foreign Minister Anastase Gasana told AFP that an explanation given by Kenyan police, who said that the moderate Hutu former minister appeared to have been gunned down over money, was "unrealistic."

Sendashonga, who served as interior minister in a Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government after mainly Tutsi rebels seized Kigali in July 1994, was alleged by Kenyan police to have left his country in 1995 with \$54 million in stolen funds.

The exiled politician, who had become an outspoken critic of the RPF regime, was shot dead in his car in Nairobi's Westlands suburb on May 16, with his wife's chauffeur Bosco Akuluyubu.

Kenyan police arrested two Rwandans and a Ugandan shortly after the killing. They accused one of the Rwandans, a Tutsi businessman, of ordering the murder, and the other two detainees of carrying it out.

None of the suspects have been identified.

The police said the businessman had accused Sendashonga of stealing \$54 million from Rwanda's coffers when he fell out with the RPF and left the country, then ordering the killing of the exiled Tutsi's own father, also purportedly involved in the crime.

Mr. Gasana rejected this explanation, pointing out that \$54 million was "an enormous sum" and that the alleged theft was a "totally unrealistic" hypothesis according to finance officials.

The Kenyan police claim was "all the more unlikely in that Seth Sendashonga was, in my view, a man of integrity," Mr. Gasana said.

"Up until now, Kenyan police have not given any precise details," he added. "We only know, through the press, that they've taken in three people, but we have no other information."

Last week, the RPF government denied claims from exiled Hutu leaders that it had been behind Sendashonga's murder, which came the month after he criticised Kigali for publicly executing 22 people convicted of genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

The RPF's seizure of Kigali put an end to the slaughter by Hutu extremists of between 500,000 and 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

The massacres which were sparked by the killing in April 1994 of elected Hutu President Juvénal Habyarimana.

Sendashonga, who had joined the largely Tutsi movement and became one of the Hutus to serve in the post-civil war administration, quit the government and Rwanda in August the following year, accusing the RPF itself of carrying out atrocities.

His central African country is still wracked by Hutu extremist insurgency and the effects of the genocide, for which scores of thousands of suspects are packed into overcrowded jails awaiting trial. Sendashonga had himself been due to appear as a witness before a U.N.-established court sitting in Tanzania to try alleged ringleaders of the massacres.

That court has convicted one defendant but handed down no sentences and cannot impose capital punishment. When Rwandan courts did so and the public executions took place, Sendashonga said they would wreck prospects for peace and reconciliation.

Sendashonga had already narrowly escaped death in a February 1996 assassination bid which he blamed on the RPF regime, a claim denied in Kigali.

Decommissioning chief sees Northern Irish guns handed in

BELFAST (R) — Northern Ireland's arms decommissioning chief said Monday he was hopeful outlawed groups would hand in their weapons as agreed in the British-rule province's peace deal.

Canada's General John de Chastelain said his independent commission charged with clearing the province of illegal weapons had already made contact with one of three armed groups which had political representatives at the peace talks.

"We will seek in the days and weeks ahead to continue the contacts that we have and improve on them and hopefully get this system started," he said in an interview with BBC radio.

"We will sit down and work out the dates and of course we will make sure that the weapons and arms,

explosives, ammunition handed in are not subjected in any way to forensic testing to bring prosecution," he added.

Gen. de Chastelain said the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) had named progressive Unionist Party negotiator Billy Hutchinson as its representative.

He said he hoped to make contact with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Ulster Defence Association (UDA) soon to start the process of ridding the province of weapons by May 2000 as agreed in the peace deal.

Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, whose party is allied to the IRA, said Sunday that he and his colleagues would honour their pledge to do all they could to bring about the decommissioning of the IRA's arsenal.

He said he would speak to Gen. de Chastelain's commission but tied the process of IRA decommissioning to the demilitarisation of the British army and police reforms.

Arms experts say the outlawed IRA has between two and three tonnes of semtex explosive — enough to obliterate at least 2,500 homes.

Hundreds of AK-47 assault rifles and other types of guns are buried in arms dumps across the island or in concrete Belfast basements.

Irish Times Security Correspondent Jim Cusack has said the IRA also has two or three Soviet-made Sam-7 ground-to-air missiles smuggled from Libya.

He says the UDA has at least 200 rifles or machine pistols, at least 200 handguns and an unknown

amount of commercial explosive, while the UVF has a similar cache.

The loyalist Volunteer Force, blamed for the killings of 11 Roman Catholics since Christmas, also has guns, explosive and detonators though it called a truce shortly before Friday's referendum on the peace deal to urge a "no" vote.

Republican groups who are not on ceasefire are also thought to have some semtex of their own.

Gen. de Chastelain said the weapons could not be left to rust as people would never be able to live in peace not knowing if guns were getting into the wrong hands.

"If you leave large numbers of weapons in play, no matter how well they're guarded, no matter who has them, there is a chance that

they fall into the hands of people who have nothing to do with the political process," he said.

Some smaller armed groups opposed the peace talks, including three republican groups and the pro-British LVF.

Police in the Irish Republic are still questioning two suspected republican dissidents arrested as they tried to drive about 454 kg towards the Irish border Saturday.

Later in Belfast, an army officer escaped injury when what police called a "crude, improvised bomb" exploded under a railway bridge. Two men were arrested.

The incidents proved what many people here suspected — that the plague of violence will not vanish overnight despite the resounding "yes" vote in the referendum.

India 'failing to tackle child labour'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The Indian government said Monday it had "miserably failed" to tackle the rise of child labour in the country.

L. Mishra, a top official in the labour ministry, said although the government was genuinely making efforts to curb the practice, "it has miserably failed in tackling this gigantic problem."

"Despite constitutional provisions and of late various directives from the Supreme Court, we have failed in its total enforcement at the grass-root level," he told a government-sponsored conference here.

India is estimated to have some 60 million children engaged in jobs ranging from

home-based factories producing bangles to mining, carpet weaving and housing construction.

Many work for long hours in dangerous conditions for low wages.

Mr. Mishra said the government could not be held "solely responsible" for the plight of working children.

"It is high time all those involved in this uphill task do some retrospection and come out with the best possible solutions," he added.

Earlier this year, India rejected a United Nations request to investigate work conditions of children in the country, arguing it was in a better position to deal with the issue itself.

Last month around 1,500 children marched through New Delhi as part of a worldwide protest against child labour organised by the India-based South Asia Coalition Against Child Servitude.

Four separate protest marches — from Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa — are due to converge on the Swiss city of Geneva on June 1 after covering a combined distance of 50,000 kilometres.

They are heading for the International Labour Organisation in Geneva where a new convention designed to force countries to honour commitments on child labour is being drawn up.

Pakistani plane hijackers arrested

HYDERABAD, Pakistan (AFP) — Three hijackers who seized a plane in Pakistan to oppose nuclear tests in their native Baluchistan province were overpowered and arrested early Monday after being duped by the pilot, officials said.

One hijacker and a commando were shot and wounded when the three were seized while releasing women and children from the 33 passengers and crew on board the Pakistan International Airways plane at 2:50 a.m. (2150 GMT Sunday).

The "eight-hour" drama ended at Hyderabad airport after the hijackers — who had threatened to blow up the plane — were led to believe they had been taken to India as they had demanded.

The hijackers were seized in the melee as passengers scrambled to get out of the plane, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said.

A senior airline official, Kaleem Malik, said an army commando was injured by a bullet fired by one of the hijackers.

Police in Hyderabad said one of the hijackers, identified as Sabir Ali, was wounded by a bullet and taken to a hospital in the city.

They identified the two other hijackers only as Shahsawar and Shabbir.

The wounded commando, a major of the Special Services Group (SSG), was admitted to a military hospital in Hyderabad.

Before being overpowered the hijackers, armed with pistols and reportedly with explosives, got off the plane for talks with the authorities.

APP said the hijackers were made to believe they were in India and the negotiators posed as Indian officials. The hijackers were fooled by the pilot into landing at Hyderabad.

The three men told the "negotiators" that their impoverished southwestern Baluchistan province in Pakistan needed development funds, not a nuclear test in retaliation for five detonations by India two weeks ago, the sources said.

They left the plane for talks with the authorities more than five hours after it landed at Hyderabad, after being seized on a domestic flight from the coastal town of Gawadar in Baluchistan to Karachi.

Security officials said that during the negotiations the hijackers agreed to release women and children from among the 29 passengers and four crew. As the terrified passengers scrambled out, the SSG commandos pounced on the gunmen and overpowered the trio.

Pilot Zuhair Ahmad told reporters how he saved his passengers by duping the hijackers.

He said two of them had stormed into the cockpit, put pistols to his head and ordered him and his co-pilot to fly to India. "Wherever you say," was Ahmad's response. "I pushed the hijack code and just tried to pacify them all the time," he told reporters.

Mr. Ahmad said he landed the plane at Hyderabad and told the hijackers: "We are in the town of Bhoj in India and need fuel to go further."

"These fools continued to believe they were in India until their arrest," he added. "But I do not know whether they were fools or it was due to the prayers of my parents that I saved all the passengers."

Passengers quoted a pistol-wielding youth as shouting: "We will blow up the plane." Another displayed a bag which he said contained explosives.

"I started crying, thinking that we all will die," said an emotional Zubaida Shakil, clutching her six-month-old girl. "We have no enmity with you, we have enmity with the Pakistani government. They have money for the atom bomb but they do not have funds for Baluchistan," passengers quoted one hijacker as saying.

Hundreds of people were killed in floods in March but no aid had arrived as yet, another complained.

Baluchi nationalist groups have opposed any nuclear explosion by the government, in contrast to a string of pro-nuclear rallies by religious and political parties elsewhere in the country.

Hundreds of students staged a demonstration last week in the Baluchistan provincial capital Quetta amid speculation Pakistan was preparing a tit-for-tat response to India.

Dostan Wadh in Chaghi district is rumoured to be a possible nuclear test site in Baluchistan, a vast desert region.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has not ruled out a test but said his government would not act in haste.

The last hijacking in Pakistan occurred in 1988 when an abortive attempt was made by an lone ethnic Pashtun to hijack a PIA plane to the Afghan capital Kabul.

In 1986 a New York-bound Pan American airlines Boeing 747 with 399 people on board was hijacked by five Arabs when it landed at Karachi from Bombay. The 16-hour drama left 20 people dead and more than 100 injured when Pakistani commandos stormed the plane.

Floods in south China kill at least 37

BEIJING (AFP) — At least 37 people died in south China floods late last week, news reports said Monday, bringing the reported death toll to almost 90 nationwide since heavy summer rains started.

Thirty died and "an unknown number of others were missing" after torrential rains lashed 11 cities and counties in southern Hunan province between last Thursday and Saturday, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Fast-rising waters also killed more than 10,000 cattle and damaged 57,500 hectares of farmland, it said, quoting a spokesman for the provincial flood control headquarters.

Some 23,300 homes collapsed, and highway, power and telecommunications networks were damaged in the provincial capital of Changsha as well as cities

including Loudi, Shaoyang and Hengyang.

In Guangdong province's Shenzhen city, seven people were killed, one was missing and six others injured in floods at the weekend, the Hong Kong daily Wen Wei Po reported.

Fear of the victims, including a child, were swept off by raging floodwaters Sunday while another three were killed when a wall collapsed, it said.

The rainstorms also affected neighbouring Hong Kong, where eight people were left slightly injured and helicopters and dinghies rescued some 100 villagers trapped by rising floodwaters.

Officials have warned that the influence of the El Niño weather phenomenon could bring more severe floods than usual this year, after last year's relatively low death

toll of 600.

Summer flooding has come two months early in the southern provinces of Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, which have received four times the normal seasonal amount of rain.

Unusual flooding in the northwestern regions of Xinjiang and Gansu has also left at least 30 dead.

"Sustained heavy rain may hit areas along the Yangtze River and Yellow River and there is a possibility of a large-scale catastrophic flood this year," the news agency quoted a vice minister of water resources as saying.

To make matters worse, El Niño has also exacerbated seasonal droughts across the interior of China, and more than two million hectares of farmland have been affected.

Africa 'set for brighter future'

HARARE (AFP) — Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe today is all the more resounding when we recall that the travesty perpetrated by the military in Sierra Leone on this occasion last year has been successfully overturned and a just and elected government reinstalled."

Mr. Mugabe said.

President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, toppled by the military on May 25 last year, was returned to power in March following an OAU-backed offensive by a Nigerian-led

force acting in the name of the Economic Community of West African States.

Mr. Mugabe said that despite the problems besetting Africa there was a renewed vigour in the pursuit of common goals, including economic cooperation, which marked a real renaissance on the continent.

This raised prospects for the eradication of conflict, suffering and misery and the creation of peace stability and social development.

He said the ousting of the military regime in Sierra Leone and the restoration of a democratically-elected government in the West African state was a sign of renewed African resolve to end conflicts and defend democracy.

"Our joy and celebration today is all the more resounding when we recall that the travesty perpetrated by the military in Sierra Leone on this occasion last year has been successfully overturned and a just and elected government reinstalled."

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Finland offers refuge to Yugo war crimes witnesses

HELSINKI (R) — Finland said Monday it would offer shelter to witnesses of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia if they feared reprisals for testifying before the Hague tribunal.

A foreign ministry official said the offer came in response to a request from the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia which investigates war crimes committed on all sides during the recent Balkan wars.

"It's a reserve plan under which Finland would provide domicile to witnesses who are scared," Erkki Kourula, head of the ministry's international law department, told Reuters.

He said, however, that it seemed unlikely the offer would encourage more witnesses to come forward.

"It's such a big step for someone to change their whole life and leave their country," Mr. Kourula said. "It could be that

none of the witnesses will be ever brought to Finland."

Over 70 people have been indicted by the Hague-based tribunal over their role in atrocities during the Yugoslav civil war.

But the court has had difficulties convincing witnesses they should give evidence. Many have cited fear of persecution on returning to former Yugoslavia as the reason for refusing to testify.

هناك من لا يرى

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Netanyahu to blame

UNDER THE leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel is celebrating its 50th anniversary in a manner that in many ways is provocative to its Arab peace partners. The latest manifestation of this is Israel's reckless flouting of international norms by holding a military parade through Arab Jerusalem.

Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority tried to persuade Israel to halt this defiant and spiteful celebration and condemned it in the strongest terms but without success. U.N. Security Council Resolution 250 was applied successfully in the past to abort a similar parade in 1968. That resolution is still valid and Israel's allies and friends should remind it of this legal and political fact. But Netanyahu has only arrogant contempt for the views of even the closet allies of his country.

Another manifestation of Netanyahu's wanton disregard of international law is his recent orders to the so-called "Absentee Owners Authority" to start selling Palestinian properties left behind in the wake of the 1947-48 war, to Israelis. This latest seizure of Palestinian lands and houses comes in utter disregard not only to U.N. Resolution 194 but also the Oslo accords, which left the determination of the entire issue of Palestinian refugees for final status negotiations.

Netanyahu must realise that the rightful owners of these properties and their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will never relinquish their rights to them no matter to what extent Netanyahu and like-minded Israelis would go to sever the Palestinians' linkage to their ancestral homes and lands.

When Netanyahu was elected in 1996, Leah Rabin, the widow of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, termed his election as the death warrant to the peace process. Labour leader Ehud Barak described Netanyahu then as a compulsive "liar" who would not hesitate to lie to all sides be they Arabs or Israelis, Americans or Europeans. This streak in the character of the Israeli leader is beginning to take its toll on what is left of the peace process.

Instead of referring to the string of suicide bombings in 1996 as the culprit for the demise of the Oslo accords, Netanyahu would be more correct in describing his own election as the event that led to the collapse of the entire peace process, exactly as Mrs. Rabin predicted two years ago.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Saleh Qallab expressed doubt that the U.S. will carry out its threats and withdraw from sponsoring the peace process and backing Israel's stand. He said the U.S. Congress will prevent the Clinton administration from doing so. It is true the U.S. administration has suffered insults from Benjamin Netanyahu, and it is true the Americans allowed the European Union to threaten to ban products made in the occupied Arab land but labelled "made in Israel," from entering European markets, but the U.S. administration cannot escape the orders of Congress which has become an arena for Zionists, said the writer. Again the idea of France and Egypt to convene an international conference to discuss the stalled peace process, according to Qallab, was a sort of pressure on Israel to change its present attitude, but that too is not expected to succeed as long as Netanyahu is in power. The writer said as long as the Congress, which is openly biased towards Israel, is dominated by Zionist ideas, Netanyahu will fear no U.S. or European governments and is expected to pursue his present policies in defiance of the world community.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud discussed the financial constraints of Jordan's state universities, which, he said, are unable to pay their dues. He said even university professors' salaries have been delayed due to the lack of funds, something which reflects very negatively on the teachers and the educational process. The writer said, unless the government moves fast to address the situation and allocates funds to ensure the continued development of the universities' research and teaching activities, these institutions will face real trouble. The government continues to extend help to the faltering municipal councils and normally comes to the aid of public sector firms that have been facing losses, Daoud said. Thus, he said, it has the means to deal with the financial crisis in the state's higher education sector. The writer urged the government to allocate annual budgets that would enable universities to deal with their crises, otherwise the higher education system will be jeopardised.

How America can head off an arms race in South Asia

By Setig S. Harrison

WASHINGTON — Despite India's five nuclear tests last week, there is still a way for the Clinton administration to stop New Delhi from embarking on a costly and dangerous nuclear arms race with China and Pakistan.

The sanctions imposed by President Bill Clinton will only make India more intransigent unless they are accompanied by realistic diplomatic trade-offs.

Indian leaders have made clear that they are ready to end testing and to cut off stockpiling of plutonium for nuclear weapons if the Clinton administration will end sanctions and give India, as it has given China, access to U.S. civilian nuclear technology to help satisfy the burgeoning energy demands of an exploding population, now nearing one billion.

China conducted a much-criticised series of six nuclear tests from 1994 to 1996 before announcing its readiness to sign the nuclear test ban treaty. Less than two years later, the Clinton administration has just reversed a U.S. ban on the sale of U.S. civilian nuclear technology to Beijing in return for Chinese commitments not to export nuclear and missile components and know-how.

Unlike China, Indians point out, India has never exported nuclear and missile technology despite multi-billion-dollar offers from Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qadhafi.

Productive negotiations with New Delhi are still possible. Although India last week declared itself a "nuclear weapons state," it has not yet decided whether to deploy nuclear weapons in its armed forces and, if so, how extensively. The purpose of testing, Indian leaders say, was to demonstrate a capability to make sophisticated nuclear weapons and to deploy them on short notice, especially a nuclear warhead for its Agni intermediate-range ballistic missile.

The decision to test last week was in large part a response to domestic political pressures that are now likely to subside. Six weeks ago, when Pakistan tested a new missile capable of reaching deep into Indian territory, the new Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee felt compelled to respond strongly. American warnings that testing would bring sanctions fanned nationalist sentiment, and Indian public opinion has overwhelmingly welcomed the tests.

I spent six years in India as a foreign correspondent and still visit frequently. Every politically conscious Indian I know deeply resents the American attitude that the United States and the four other nuclear powers are entitled to have nuclear weapons while India and other aspiring powers are not. This feeling is a more important factor driving Indian nuclear ambitions than fear of Chinese and Pakistani military strength.

Since India is one of the world's oldest and largest civilisations, its people take its great-power status for granted and expect others to do the same. Successive American administrations have either patronised or ignored India while lecturing it about non-proliferation.

Until two years ago, the United States repeatedly pressed

India and Pakistan to give up their nuclear options. But in January 1995, then Defence Secretary William Perry announced an important, little-noticed reversal. He acknowledged that "the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan flow from a dynamic that we are unlikely to be able to influence in the near term. Rather than seeking to roll back — which we have concluded is unattainable in these two countries — we have decided, instead, to seek to cap their nuclear capabilities."

Nevertheless, Washington has failed to give New Delhi and Islamabad concrete incentives to cap their nuclear weapons potential at present levels. The technology transfer agreement with China has made it urgently necessary for the Clinton administration to explore precisely what India would be prepared to do in return for access to U.S. civilian nuclear technology and U.S. cooperation in nuclear safety. Until an accommodation is reached with India, no agreement with Pakistan is possible.

What would Gandhi think?

COMING FROM Mahatma Gandhi's India as I do, I wish you could see through my eyes the painful irony in the nuclear bomb's taking center stage as the alleged pride of the Indian people. What a tragic assault on Gandhi's legacy.

Gandhi represented the triumph of the human spirit over physical force and material things. With all my heart I appeal to the world powers not to lose sight of his singular example. I ask the United States, and the West in general, to show more understanding of the tensions throughout Asia. To India I would point out that it was Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister after independence, who initially proposed a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It is high time that India added its signature to that pact.

The West also must take into account the pressures of living with nuclear weapons in a region where the threat of war constantly simmers, and it must show continuing patience with the mistrust of poor countries once ruled by outside powers.

The West can have no idea of the fear in which the subcontinent's people have lived for half a century. Pakistan and India are still paying for the imperial policy of "divide and rule" which Britain sought to hold the subcontinent by playing communal factions against one another.

I urge the West to make a more sustained effort to help Asia solve its problems. If sanctions must be imposed, restrict arms sales to the impoverished region and do everything possible to end an arms race that these countries cannot afford. Send assistance to the areas where it is needed most: education, business, agriculture and medicine. Improve the lives of the people and you will ensure stability.

— Eknath Easwaran, author of "Gandhi the Man," commenting in the International Herald Tribune.

1 Malaysia
Prime Minister Mahatma Mohd. N. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

2 Burma
President U Nu. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

3 Vietnam
President Tran Duc Luong. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

4 Thailand
PM Chuan Leekpai. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

5 Philippines
President Fidel Ramos. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

6 China
President Jiang Zemin. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

7 S. Korea
President Kim Dae-jung. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

8 Japan
PM Ryutaro Hashimoto. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

Indonesia
President Suharto. The country is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is a developing country with a high level of economic growth.

Demise of Suharto is part of a regional trend

By Alan Dupont

CANBERRA — The demise of President Suharto after 32 years in power is an event of seminal importance not only for Indonesia but also for the broader region. He is the latest and most prominent political casualty of a trend toward greater democratisation that is transforming the nature of politics in East Asia.

This transformation has been under way for at least a decade, transcending national boundaries and East Asia's diverse political and social systems. It has been characterised by the emergence of "people power" as a potent new political dynamic in the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and now Indonesia.

In these states, seemingly well-entrenched authoritarian regimes backed by the armed forces have crumbled, often with surprising rapidity. They have been replaced with governments more in tune with the aspirations of ordinary people.

Reversions to authoritarianism cannot be ruled out. But recent events in Indonesia confirm that the underlying trend in East Asia is toward participatory government and the empowerment of the region's previously quiescent middle classes. This trend cuts across political, religious and ideological divides. With the notable exceptions of Burma and North Korea, every state in the region has become more open and democratic than it was 10 or 20 years ago.

Significantly, the trend away from old-style authoritarianism is occurring at a time of leadership transition in East Asia. Since China's Jiang Zemin consolidated his power in 1997, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea and Indonesia have installed new leaders (and the Philippines has just elected one). Political change is likely to occur in Cambodia, Malaysia, Taiwan and Japan over the next 18 months.

The way in which Mr. Suharto was pressured to step down will imprint itself on the collective consciousness of a new generation of Asian leaders. The lessons are clear. Unless leaders preside over governments that are politically responsive, financially prudent and economically competent they will find it increasingly difficult to retain power.

Another aspect of Mr. Suharto's downfall that has ramifications beyond Indonesia is the way in which the political prerogatives and policy options of national governments are being circumscribed by what Prime Minister Mahathir Ben Mohammad of Malaysia has darkly referred to as "outside influences" — global financial markets and institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

To the consternation of many in the region, the IMF has played a central, if unintended, role in bringing the Suharto era to a close by insisting that Indonesia meet stringent economic and financial standards before being granted access to the \$43 billion IMF rescue package. The

resultant price rises aggravated the political crisis and directly contributed to the demonstrations and rioting that precipitated Mr. Suharto's resignation.

Already there are calls for the IMF to adopt a less interventionist role and to take greater account of political realities before tendering advice and offering assistance. The Indonesian experience is likely to strengthen the determination of those who want to establish a regional alternative to the IMF that would be less intrusive and less dominated by the United States and Western financial interests.

The capacity of Indonesia's new government to get its economy back on track is critical to the economic health of the wider region for two reasons.

In the eyes of international investors, Indonesia is emblematic of East Asia's economic malaise. Investor confidence in the region will not return until Indonesia shows clear signs of economic recovery.

There is also concern about the Indonesian exposure of Japanese banks and financial institutions. Japan is Indonesia's largest foreign investor with outstanding loans totalling around \$23 billion. If the Indonesian economy does not recover soon, much of this debt may have to be written off. This would place added stress on Japan's already ailing financial sector.

If Japan descends into recession, the region's economic and political illness will enter a more

virulent phase, raising the prospect of further instability and uncertainty.

Indonesia's domestic turmoil will strike another blow to the pride and confidence of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Barely 12 months ago ASEAN was riding high, buoyed by burgeoning economic growth and the belief that it was on the verge of achieving its aim of a united and prosperous Southeast Asia.

Now the group must contemplate the temporary loss of Indonesian leadership as its largest and most influential member enters a period of introspection and domestic uncertainty. Indonesia's problems will diminish ASEAN's political and economic authority, and reduce its ability to act as a strategic counterweight to the region's ascendant power, China.

For all these reasons, Indonesians are not the only ones with a vital stake in the outcome of the reform process now under way in their country.

The writer is director of the Asia-Pacific Security Programme at the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre. This comment is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

Feature The Pales

By Ray Jureidini

RECENT STATEMENTS from Israeli foreign ministers indicate that initiatives are being implemented which should assist the Palestinians in their quest for a new policy of guaranteeing permanent access to Israel. Making it clear that Israel has an interest in reducing the number of foreign workers, the government has implemented a number of initiatives to assist the Palestinians in their quest for a new policy of guaranteeing permanent access to Israel. Making it clear that Israel has an interest in reducing the number of foreign workers, the government has implemented a number of initiatives to assist the Palestinians in their quest for a new policy of guaranteeing permanent access to Israel.

Up to the mid 1970s, Israel was the source of employment for more than a third of the Palestinian work force in the West Bank and Gaza. After this time the Palestinian states also became a source of employment for Palestinians from the occupied territories and Jordan. But after the 1980s, when the number of Palestinian workers in the Gulf states began to decline, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel began to rise. In 1990, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1991, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1992, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1993, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1994, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1995, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1996, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1997, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1998, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel was 65,000.

Guest workers replace Palestinian labour

Numbers fell again to 65,000 following the blanket closure policy of the Israeli government in April 1993. In the 1990s, the figure fell to as low as 37,000 in early 1990 before increasing to 69,000 in the latter part of that year. Coupled with a decline in employment in Jordan, Syria and Iraq, Palestinian labour became the pariah of the Middle East labour market. The closure created a serious shortage of labour in Israel. Guest workers from Romania and Thailand, among others, began to replace the Palestinians. The number of guest workers in Israel rose to 65,000 in 1993. In 1994, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1995, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1996, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1997, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1998, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000.

When they are no longer wanted, they are often return as "tourists" without any form of legal status. In 1993, Israel allowed guest workers to enter the country on a temporary basis. The number of guest workers in Israel rose to 65,000 in 1993. In 1994, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1995, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1996, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1997, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000. In 1998, the number of guest workers in Israel was 65,000.

The Palestinians and Israel's need to import labour

By Ray Jureidini

RECENT STATEMENTS from the Israeli foreign ministry indicate a number of initiatives are being implemented which should assist the Palestinians under a new policy of guaranteeing them access to work in Israel to replace foreign labour. Making it clear that Israel has an "interest in reducing the numbers of foreign workers," several measures are to be implemented, namely: allowing 5,000 Palestinian labourers to remain within Israel overnight; allowing permanent access to Israel for 30,000 Palestinians, regardless of security closures; elimination of quotas on the number of truck crossings allowed; designation of around 12,000 "merchants, notables and businessmen who may enter Israel under special permits;" and facilitation of industrial parks, particularly at the Karni checkpoint in Gaza and in the West Bank (at Erez on the Gaza-Israel border there are more than 80 enterprises employing 3,000 Gazan workers, but more than half [those establishments] are owned by Israelis).

Up to the mid-1970s, Israel was a major source of employment and income for more than a third of the Palestinian work force in the West Bank and Gaza. After this time the Gulf oil-producing states also became an important destination for Palestinian workers (mainly from the occupied territories and Jordan, but also from Lebanon and Syria). Between 1968 and 1980 remittances from skilled Palestinian workers in the Gulf states and unskilled workers in Israel contributed 15 per cent of Palestinian GNP.

Throughout the 1980s, however, countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia began to curb Palestinian entry in favour of workers who were not so politically encumbered. Just prior to and following the Gulf war in 1991, many Palestinians were either expelled or evacuated voluntarily. In Kuwait the number of Palestinian workers was reduced from around 350,000 prior to the Gulf crisis to approximately 30,000 in 1992; they were replaced mainly by people from South and East Asia.

At the same time, Israel began implementing a policy of blanket closures against Palestinians entering for work. Before the intifada (1987-1990) up to 180,000 Palestinians from the territories found employment in Israel and the settlements. The numbers gradually declined because of Israeli curfews on towns, villages and whole districts and also because of strikes by the Palestinians. Following the Gulf war, only about 100,000 were allowed in. There was a gradual increase to around 116,000 in 1992 but this declined again following the introduction of new work permits.

Guest workers replace Palestinian labour

The number fell again to 65,000 following the blanket closure policy of the Rabin government in April 1993. After the Oslo accords, the figure dropped to as low as 37,000 in early 1996 before increasing to 69,000 in the third quarter of that year. Coupled with severe limits on employment in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, Palestinians had become the pariahs of the Middle East labour market.

The closures created a serious shortage of manpower in Israel. Guest workers from Romania and Thailand, soldiers, prisoners nearing the end of their sentence and American volunteers were used to overcome the shortage of labour. A major concern has been to avoid the problems of European countries which introduced the system of guest workers who often did not return to their countries of origin and have now had three generations of permanent residency. Workers do not always leave when they are no longer wanted. Many overstay their visas and disappear as illegal aliens. Those who go back home often return as "tourists" and work illegally.

To prevent this, Israel allowed arrangements of indentured, or bonded, labour which tie the worker contractually to a particular employer. Private manpower agencies, particularly for construction and agriculture, began to recruit workers from countries like Kenya, Romania, Thailand and the Philippines which ironically undercut the price of Palestinian labour. In the territories, for example, average wage levels are around \$350-400 per month compared with Romania, where wage levels average \$150 per month.

However, the pay and conditions of employment often motivated foreign employees to leave the employer to whom they were contracted, which rendered them illegal aliens. In attempts to stop this, employers have instituted draconian measures such as withholding wages, confiscating passports, and imposing large fines which, if not paid, result in imprisonment. In one instance, a contract for Kenyans stipulated a \$3,000 fine if the worker left the employer — if not paid, he faces imprisonment. If the worker cannot be found, his family in Kenya is required

to pay the fine or serve time in prison, under an agreement with the Kenyan government. Other reported measures include family homes in Romania being confiscated.

Despite these types of penalties, many foreign workers have gone underground in search of higher wages. Estimates of the number of illegal foreign workers in Israel range from 80,000 to 250,000. With a lack of access to social and health services and at the mercy of some ruthless employers, enclaves of illegal workers, particularly from Eastern Europe, have resulted in destitution, drunkenness, violence and prostitution which is most visible in Tel Aviv.

Contractors who use manpower organisations are often also active in private security arrangements and can use their own security personnel to police the arrangements. For example, the legal employer is obliged to see the worker off at the end of the contract, for there is a 5,000 shekel bond which is returned on the worker's exit from the country. If the foreign worker becomes illegal, the contracting employers may lose their bond as well as their permit to bring in others. Similarly, an employer who hires illegal labour is subject to a fine and banned from future permits to import foreign labour.

One of the solutions proposed is to increase the number of workers from neighbouring Arab countries. This was suggested by Dr. Roby Nathanson, chairman of the Israeli Institute for Economic and Social Research: "Though the costs of trying to ensure security with such a labour force [are] high, these populations would be 'commuting workers,' unlikely to settle in Israel and thus less of a long-term burden on society."

Palestinian economic development in Israel's interests

It is often said that the best solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is Palestinian economic development (although diaspora Palestinians, particularly refugees, are too often forgotten). The Israeli foreign ministry has stated: "It is in Israel's clear political and security interest to act for the advancement of the Palestinian economy and the well-being of the Palestinian population." Past practices which have retarded Palestinian economic and industrial development need to be changed. Current proposals to develop industrial zones on the borders between Israel and the territories also offer potential for Palestinian employment. Israeli employers will not have to pay Palestinians Israeli minimum wages, particularly in labour-intensive industries. Joint Israeli, Palestinian and foreign capital ventures are proposed in industries such as textiles, furniture and food-processing. However, a number of textile manufacturers in Israel are currently relocating to take advantage of cheaper labour in Jordan and Egypt, which is causing concern for both Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians (including Israeli Arabs) charge Jordan and Egypt with disloyalty for unfairly competing with Palestinian labour.

On the one hand, the Israeli government wants to decrease the number of both legal and illegal foreign workers in Israel. On the other hand, Israeli employers still prefer to employ foreign workers who cost less and are not subject to closures. Shlomo Dror, spokesman for the Israeli coordinator in the territories, stated on February 23 that "Israeli employers are willing to risk fines and everything associated with it in order to employ the foreign worker instead of the Palestinian worker." From the Palestinian side in the West Bank and Gaza, their immediate economic interests are to improve access to jobs in Israel and other countries. Ghazi Khalili, director of planning at the Palestinian Ministry of Labour has recently stated: "There is a need to export at least twelve per cent of the total Palestinian labour force to the Israeli markets or to other possible outside markets for several more years. This is necessary to keep unemployment at 18-20 per cent and to reduce underemployment to reasonable rates. However, exporting labour is only a temporary solution, especially since it is solely controlled by Israel."

The extent to which Israel's new policy measures to replace foreign labour with Palestinians are actually implemented, and to which they result in the enhancement of Palestinian economic well-being, remains to be seen.

The writer is a sociologist at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. He is also vice chairman of the Australian Arabic Council.

— Middle East International



An Israeli border guard checks the work permits of Palestinian workers at the Erez Crossing into the Gaza Strip (AFP file photo)

Netanyahu survives no-confidence vote over peace process comments

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli opposition Monday failed in its bid to have a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu adopted over the premier's claim last week that the Middle East peace process "collapsed" before he came to power.

The motion received 42 votes in favour with just one against and two abstentions. Under Israeli rules, a no-confidence has to secure the backing of 61 MKs in the 120-member Knesset or parliament to be carried. MKs of Mr. Netanyahu's

governing coalition boycotted the vote in protest at its being held while the prime minister is abroad on an official visit to China.

Mr. Netanyahu's comment to foreign diplomats Friday that it was unfair to blame his government for the 14-month-old crisis in the peace process because "the truth is peace collapsed two years ago" raised howls of anger from the opposition. Sunday, Mr. Netanyahu insisted he had been misunderstood and the peace process was still alive.

"The prime minister is strangling peace and putting Israel's security in danger," opposition leader Ehud Barak said.

Former prime minister Shimon Peres, an architect of the Oslo accords who was defeated by Mr. Netanyahu in May 1996 elections, added: "The time has come for Netanyahu to stop blaming the previous government for all his failures and start doing something for peace."

Arafat to snub Gingrich over his support for Jerusalem occupation

(Continued from page 1)

warning that a scheduled visit by the U.S. House leader to the site set aside for the future U.S. embassy in Jerusalem could spark violent protests by the Palestinians.

Mr. Gingrich cancelled the embassy site visit after a request by U.S. President Bill Clinton, although he drove by the site Monday during a tour with Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert which also took him by Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem.

Mr. Gingrich sponsored legislation demanding the U.S. embassy be moved from Tel Aviv to the Jerusalem site by 1999, a move which Palestinians condemn as tacit recognition of Israel's 1967 occupation and illegal annexation of Arab east Jerusalem.

Mr. Erekat, who said he held "constructive talks" Monday on the peace process with U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman, a Democratic member of the visiting congressional delegation, insisted his statement was "a warning not a threat."

Mr. Gingrich, a conservative Republican, has been an outspoken backer of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and has vehemently protested

pressure by Mr. Clinton on Israel to accept U.S. proposals to break the deadlock in the peace process.

Mr. Gingrich has repeatedly supported Mr. Netanyahu's stance that Israel alone must determine the scope of a West Bank troop withdrawal without interference from Washington.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has expressed its support to a call by Mr. Arafat for holding an Arab summit on the stalled Middle East peace process, officials said.

Mr. Arafat told Saudi King Fahd during their meeting that he will formally propose holding the summit during a conference of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on Tuesday.

Sceptical about U.S. mediation efforts in the Middle East, the Palestinians are working to convene an Arab summit that would declare that relations with Israel are being frozen.

Such an announcement would be a major blow to Israel which at the height of Mideast peace-making had emerged from its regional isolation and established new ties with several Arab countries.

Jordan, Egypt, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have already agreed to

attend, said Mr. Erekat.

The summit is to be convened shortly after the U.S. peace initiative has played itself out, he continued. The summit would pick up where a similar conference left off two years ago — with a warning that the Arab World would suspend normalisation unless Israel carried out its obligations in previous peace accords.

"This [upcoming] summit would be asked... to implement the decision made at the Arab summit in June 1996," Mr. Erekat said Monday.

Mr. Arafat had sought for several months to convene an Arab summit, but found several key Arab countries unwilling to attend as long as the United States was trying to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians. Once U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announces that her efforts have failed, Mr. Arafat would likely meet with less resistance to convene a summit.

Ms. Albright has told the Palestinians that she would give Israel another week at the most to accept a U.S. proposal for an Israeli troop pullback from 13 per cent of the West Bank, said a Palestinian official who spoke on condition of

Mordechai calls for West Bank withdrawal of more than 10 per cent

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel will have to withdraw from more than 10 per cent of the West Bank in the next long-overdue pullback from the territory, Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said Monday.

"The percentage of the West Bank from which Israel withdraws will have to be a two-figure number," Mr. Mordechai told a visiting delegation of French MPs, defence ministry officials said.

Mr. Mordechai stressed the withdrawal would be dependent on "implementation by the Palestinians of the commitments they have given concerning security."

Washington has been pressing the Israeli government to agree to withdraw from 13.1 per cent more of the West Bank in the next pullout, but it

has so far rejected the U.S. proposal as a threat to Israel's security.

National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, the leading hawk in the government, has made clear he will not accept a withdrawal of more than nine per cent.

It was the second time in as many days that Mr. Mordechai, considered the leading moderate in the government, has called for compromise on the delayed troop withdrawals which have become the key sticking point in attempts to revive negotiations with the Palestinians.

"If we do not quickly reach an agreement (on reviving negotiations) there will be bloodshed," Mr. Mordechai was quoted as telling the weekly cabinet meeting Sunday.

Two Palestinians injured in clash between soldiers, students

TEQOA (AFP) — Two Palestinians were injured here Monday when stone-throwing youths clashed with Israeli soldiers, who responded with rubber-coated bullets, witnesses said. Several dozen youths threw stones at soldiers posted outside their high school in the village of Taqoa outside the West Bank town of Bethlehem, and the soldiers fired back

with rubber-coated bullets, the witnesses said. Two of the students were lightly injured, they said. The students complained that the soldiers had been harassing students over the past week by searching them as they entered the school, which has been a frequent site of frictions between youths and soldiers.

anonymity. Israel has rejected the proposal, citing security concerns.

If Israel does not budge over the next week, Ms. Albright is expected to announce the failure of the U.S. initiative and explain the reasons. Israel would bear the brunt of the blame since the Palestinians have accepted the U.S. plan.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met into the early hours of Monday with key ministers to formulate an Israeli response to the American proposal before his departure for a five-day trip to China. However, the ministers failed to reach an agreement. Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon reportedly said Israel could not hand over more than nine per cent while Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai warned of possible Palestinian riots if the 15-month deadlock was not broken soon, newspapers reported.

Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh acknowledged differences of opinion among the ministers, but added: "There is one thing that was accepted by all the ministers... and that is that what is on the table cannot be reconciled with the security needs of Israel."

In an interview with Israel army radio, Mr. Naveh denied that the Israeli government was considering a new U.S. proposal that Israel withdraw from 15 per cent now and then forgo an additional troop pullback to which it had committed itself last year.

In a related development, Mr. Sharon, a former defence minister, was to take the U.S. congressional delegation headed by Mr. Gingrich on a helicopter tour of the West Bank later Monday to illustrate his security arguments.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia attempted to bring the Palestinians closer to Kuwait — with little success — when King Fahd met with Mr. Arafat and a Kuwaiti delegation simultaneously.

Kuwait fell out with the Palestinians after they supported Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The Kuwaitis refused to shake hands with Mr. Arafat or the other Palestinian officials and walked away after greeting King Fahd.

Mr. Arafat later met with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah and Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal.

Weizman calls on Netanyahu to accept troop withdrawal

(Continued from page 1)

"The government must very quickly decide about the [West Bank] withdrawal because a continuation of the current stalemate could spark an explosion," Mr. Weizman said.

During six months of intensive negotiations, Mr. Netanyahu and the Americans have discussed a range of pullback formulas involving nine, 11, 13 and 15 per cent of the West Bank but an agreement has been elusive. The Palestinians have accepted the U.S. compromise.

Mr. Weizman chided Mr. Netanyahu and Arab leaders for letting the peace process ground to a halt over a fraction of the West Bank.

"I sincerely believe that Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians have got so far [along the path to peace] that it would be a fundamental stupidity to blow up the whole situation with all this 15, 13 or 11 plus per cent," he said. "The trouble is that both

sides have lost their faith in each other. Arafat doesn't believe us and we don't believe Arafat," he said.

"We have to find a way to sit down with Arafat and find a solution because if we don't find a solution, something will blow up," he said.

Mr. Weizman also sought to undercut Mr. Netanyahu's main justification for taking a hard-line in the negotiations — that Israel cannot yield too much land because Mr. Arafat has failed to crack down on activists operating from zones already under his control.

"These past 18 months we have enjoyed relative calm on the terrorism front," he said.

"Yasser Arafat is fighting terrorism, more than I thought, but there are differing opinions in Israel on this," he said, adding that Israel had also failed to eliminate terrorism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip when it was in full control of the territories.

Suspects in Shmeisani, Rabia slayings arrested

(Continued from page 1)

Mohammad Jaghabeen surrendered to the police at 1:30 p.m., eyewitnesses said.

Police sources identified the remaining suspects arrested in the past few days, as Sabir Jamal Abu Markhiyeh, Attalah Abdul Aziz Abu Harb, Sultan Kayed Abu Markhiyeh, Mohammad Ali Al Mounai'e and Mohammad Yousif Al Ali. Eyewitnesses said that tens of policemen surrounded the house where the two took shelter.

Ahmad Saleh Maharmah, who resides near the house, told the Jordan Times that Jamal "was killed at 5:30 in the morning during the shoot-out with police. One bullet hit his head."

Mr. Maharmah said that police forces threw tear gas and sound bombs at the couple, who were armed with machine guns and pistols.

He added that Commander of the Special Forces Prince Abdullah arrived at the scene with a special forces unit at 11:30 a.m. and drew the plan to storm the hideout and arrest the

suspects.

Mr. Maharmah, whose window was shattered by a bullet during the shoot-out, said that the suspects blew up a gas cylinder inside their hideout, next to a wall adjacent to where their green Mercedes was parked, "which spread the fire to the car and severely damaged it."

"I woke up at 4:30 in the morning and found that the neighbourhood was totally surrounded by tens of policemen," Mr. Maharmah said.

"The police told us to stay at home and to avoid leaving the house. The shooting continued for several hours until the second suspect decided to surrender," he added.

"We saw the second suspect leaving the building bleeding. He might have been injured during the shoot-out," Mr. Maharmah said. He added that three policemen were also injured.

However, according to a police statement, only one policeman was injured during the shoot-out, and he was in a stable condition.

The injured were admitted to

the King Hussein Medical Centre for treatment.

"The two suspects are unknown to the people in our neighbourhood. They have never before visited the house where they took refuge," the witness added.

Mohammad Ali Aqil, who also lives in the neighbourhood where the shooting took place, said that an American woman and her two children who lived at the house where the suspects took refuge, were escorted away by the police in the early hours of the morning.

Mr. Aqil said that the American woman, whom he did not name, was the wife of Kayid Abu Sultan who rented the house from Mr. Maharmah.

It was not clear whether Mr. Abu Sultan is at all connected to the gang. The neighbour told the Jordan Times that he, along with his family, has been living at the house for the past ten years. They added that he was a truck driver on the route between Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Weak oil prices set to put brakes on Saudi growth

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's economic growth will slow down in 1998 because of weak oil prices after bounding ahead over the previous two years, an official report and economists have said.

Gross domestic product (GDP) of the world's oil powerhouse surged by nearly 7.1 per cent in 1997 and 8.7 per cent in 1996 because of high oil prices and an upturn in the private sector, the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) said in a quarterly report on Arab economies and stock markets.

"Saudi GDP is projected to record a real growth of five per cent in current prices this year," the Abu Dhabi-based AMF said. Inflation is also expected to remain at below one per cent this year compared with a decline of 0.5 per cent in 1997, the report showed.

Riyadh had projected a high level of spending for 1998 based on a boost in crude production and its predictions the oil market would extend its strong performance of the previous two years.

But economic analysts doubted the government would now stick to the planned expenditure as this could sharply widen the budget deficit.

"Oil prices are still more than \$5 below their 1997 level and more output cuts are on the cards," Saudi economist Ihsan Abu Huleika said.

"Growth will be sharply lower than in the previous two years but it will remain positive because of an expansion in the non-oil sectors. The rate of growth will depend on how much the government spends," he added.

Saudi Arabia, which controls more than a quarter of the global recoverable crude resources, projected expenditure at 196 billion Saudi riyals (\$52.2 billion) this year and revenue of 178 billion riyals (\$48.5 billion), assuming oil prices at around \$16.

But the price of Saudi Arabian crudes has remained below \$14 this year compared with \$18.5 and \$17.5 in 1997 and 1996.

The kingdom had also banked on an increase of 760,000 barrels per day (bpd) in its oil production under an OPEC quota agreement.

But it was forced to lower output by more than 300,000 bpd in line with the March accord between OPEC and independent producers to trim overall output to lift prices.

Oil analysts said Riyadh could make further cuts along with other major producers in the Gulf if crude prices do not improve through the year.

"There is no doubt the Saudi oil sector will sharply decline this year but this will be offset by growth in other sectors, mainly the light industries, construction, trade and services," one analyst said.

"Although the oil sector is still playing a key role in the country's income, its contribution to the GDP has sharply receded... Official figures showed the oil's share to the GDP was below 35 per cent last year," he added.

The AMF, the Arab League's main financial and economic organisation, said 1997 was one of the best years for the Saudi economy, with oil and non-oil exports growing by around 4.4 per cent to \$59.5 billion.

Despite an increase of around 1.4 per cent in imports, the trade surplus grew by nearly 7.8 per cent to \$33.8 billion.

The current account, which covers cash transfers and trade of goods and services, also recorded a surplus of \$232 million for the second year running following large gaps in the previous years.

International reserves rose by 12 per cent to \$6.6 billion at the end of February over the end of 1997, but were far below the record \$25 billion during the oil boom of early 1980s, when crude prices were as high as \$30 and Riyadh's oil output peaked at 12 million bpd.

Egypt moves cautiously on privatising banks and insurance firms

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is moving cautiously in privatising state-owned banks and insurance firms amid fears that a rapid liberalisation might trigger financial turmoil here like that in South East Asia.

After a heated debate earlier this month, the parliamentary economic affairs committee approved a bill to privatise the country's four national banks and allow unlimited foreign or domestic ownership of their capital.

On Sunday, the committee approved a similar bill paving the way for the privatisation of three national insurance firms and a reinsurance company.

The two bills must be formally approved by parliament after debates which open on June 8. Egypt pledged to privatise at least one bank and one insurance firm by the end of 1997 under an agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1996.

But officials at the Egyptian economy ministry said

the first bank privatisation would not take place before 1999 while members of parliament and experts expressed deep reservations.

Opponents of a total privatisation approach are against allowing foreigners full control of the capital of banks and insurance firms because these institutions represent the key source of national finance.

The four public sector banks set to be privatised, together control 70 per cent of commercial bank assets, 60 per cent of deposits and 68 per cent of loans.

The insurance companies control nearly 80 per cent of the market and their investments reached 10 billion Egyptian pounds (nearly \$3 billion) in 1997, according to Economy Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali.

"The government must retain control of 51 per cent of the capital of banks and insurance firms," said Mustafa Al Saeed, a former

economy minister and key opponent of the privatisation project.

Mr. Saeed, an MP from Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), warned that too much foreign control of a bank's capital could pave the way for a financial crisis in Egypt like the turmoil which hit Asia.

"I am in favour of market economy, but in Egypt the state must have the key role, mainly in the banking sector because the interests of multinationals are not necessarily identical to ours," Mr. Saeed told AFP.

But the current economy minister disagreed with him.

"The central bank has the necessary powers to control the banking system" and must, according to the law, give its approval for any sale involving more than 10 per cent of a bank's capital to an anchor investor, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said.

And in a bid to calm the fears of opponents of the banking privatisation, Mr.

Boutros-Ghali stressed that the government would move "gradually" in selling banks.

Egypt, which launched its ambitious privatisation drive in 1990, would sell its shares in public sector banks and insurance firms "progressively," Mr. Boutros-Ghali said.

Mr. Saeed, echoing several MPs who have fought the bill in parliament, warned that "regulatory laws existed in Asia but this did not prevent the crisis from happening."

An expert at the state-run National Bank of Egypt also voiced concern: "The state will lose its key financial tool through a total privatisation of banks," said the expert who asked not to be named.

In order to allay the fears of opponents of privatisation, the chairman of Egypt's federation of banks, Mahmoud Abdul Aziz, proposed privatising "by increasing the banks' capital not through selling."

U.S., Canada and Mexico to scrap duties on \$1 billion in trade

PARIS (AFP) — Senior trade officials from the United States, Mexico and Canada have agreed to scrap customs duties on a list of products which trade for about \$1 billion annually.

The duties will be removed by Aug. 1, Richard Fisher, the assistant U.S. trade representative, said after the meeting of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) bloc.

Products affected by the measure are cotton, wool and other textiles as well as chemical products, pharmaceuticals, herbicides and steel.

The meeting followed the annual ministerial conference of the Organisation for Cooperation and Development in Europe here, during which ministers from 29 countries reaffirmed their commitment to open markets.

NAFTA was established in 1994 and groups Canada, Mexico and the United States in a market of some 400 million consumers.

The NAFTA members had originally intended

to scrap the tariffs within a decade, but the Aug. 1 date means that they will be abandoned just over four years after the setting up of the grouping.

"We have decided to eliminate tariffs faster on this package," Mexican Trade Minister Herminio Blanco told a press conference.

He said that the organisation would also review its various working groups and committees to decide whether to abandon some of them, and whether new groups were needed for other sectors.

The aim is "to see what we can do better and how we can improve on the process," Mr. Fisher said.

The NAFTA trade representatives stressed the benefits of the free trade grouping in a statement issued after their meeting, a message addressed to public opinion at home, notably in the United States.

U.S. opponents of the agreement argue that NAFTA has cost tens of thousands of U.S. jobs which have been transferred to the cheaper labour market in Mexico.

Kuwait reports payment surplus for second year

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait has reported a large surplus in its 1997 balance of payments for the second year running, mainly because of a surge in oil prices and investments and lower capital outflow.

The surplus stood at 2.11 billion Kuwaiti dinars (\$6.9 billion) in 1997 compared with around two billion dinars (\$6.6 billion) in 1996, the central bank said in its annual report published in local newspapers.

Returns from the emirate's overseas investments soared by 22.8 per cent to 1.9 billion dinars (\$6.2 billion) while capital outflow dropped by 12.2 per cent to 2.06 billion dinars (\$6.8 billion).

Kuwait's balance of payments, which covers trade of goods and services, official and private transfers, and other cash flows, suffered large deficits in previous years because of low oil prices and economic damage caused by the 1990 Iraqi invasion.

Oil prices were as high as \$20.2 in 1996 and around \$19 in 1997 compared with \$16.8 in 1995 and \$15.5 in 1994.

The economic and fiscal situation of the emirate and other Gulf oil producers is expected to see one of its worst years in 1998 as crude prices have remained more than \$5 below their 1996-1997 level.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MAY 26, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You've got even more enthusiasm for new subjects you're learning. There are probably several of them, and more popping up all the time. Don't get so involved that you forget about your date tonight. That person will not be amused if you fail to show up.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If there's something expensive you just can't live without, figure out how to bring more money in, so you can buy it. There are several options. Give it some thought, then talk to your boss or another older person about it. He or she may have some ideas you haven't considered yet.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Just about everything you begin now will turn out well, especially if it involves education, travel, romance or even publishing. If you've been meaning to write a novel, this is an excellent time to start. If you've already got one written, send it off to the publishers.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Somebody's watching your every move, and making helpful comments. A little of this goes a long way with you, but you're too polite to say anything. Well, you can make it clear you'll need peace and quiet if you're going to get any work done. That's the truth, too.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you're leading a group, you'll really have to exert yourself to keep them on schedule. People will be taking off in all directions. That could certainly be a waste of time and talent. It's up to you to make sure they know what they're supposed to do, and actually do it.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're learning something important by doing something you'd rather avoid. The good news is that after you get used to whatever this is, it'll be easy. Courage involves taking something on even when you don't want to do it, and today you may have to be courageous.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Travel, education and conversation about philosophy are highly favoured. If you can't get away for the day, at least get out this evening. How about setting up a date with an interesting person or two? Pick people who can teach you something.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A big deal is about to come down. Listen carefully and ask just a few leading questions. That's one of the ways you negotiate so successfully. You know what the others know, but they don't know what you know, because you don't tell them. Remember that.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Somebody's competing with you, or hassling you in some way. Listen to the other person's argument. You might suddenly see everything from his or her point of view. You don't necessarily lose the argument, by the way. Sometimes this is how you win it.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) It looks like a hectic work day. There's paperwork to be done, and that's one of your least favourite tasks. If you're into manufacturing, be careful. The chance of making mistakes are high, when things are rushing along like this.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You've got lots of friends, but you don't usually let many people get too close. Well, if it's ever going to happen, it's probably going to happen now. A person who can spin a good tale is most likely to get enthralled. Today, that is definitely a possibility.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'll need all the help you can get to make it through this day without having an attack of nervous tension. It's epidemic. If you have a plan and stick to it, your chances of success are much higher. Your chances of sleeping peacefully tonight improve, too.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

THE Daily Crossword by Stephen Foreck

ACROSS

- 1 Loco
- 2 Separate
- 3 Old cat
- 4 Melville opus
- 5 Brazilian state
- 6 Minor
- 7 Nonsense
- 8 Flower part
- 9 Use abusive language
- 20 River in England
- 21 Carpe diem
- 22 Roentgenograms
- 25 Comic book
- 26 Expects
- 28 Colonized
- 32 AZ city
- 34 Attempted
- 35 Celacian
- 36 Sharp blows
- 37 Fraction
- 38 Eroded
- 39 Unsound
- 40 Cruel one
- 41 Wise lawyer
- 42 Australian city
- 44 Stringent
- 45 Tavern
- 46 Strained
- 47 Fight now
- 52 Permit
- 58 Feet
- 59 Roman goddess
- 57 Info
- 58 Assuage
- 59 Inflamm
- 60 Ellipse
- 61 Winglike
- 62 Powdery
- 63 Strong wind

DOWN

- 1 Catnap
- 2 Wall Street name
- 3 E.g.
- 4 In addition
- 5 Convents
- 6 Pleaser of —
- 7 King of Judah
- 8 Paddy plant
- 9 Tom
- 10 I have found it
- 11 Former student, briefly
- 12 Continent
- 13 — City, CA
- 21 Gilt
- 22 Cattle group
- 24 Tears
- 26 Open patios
- 27 Forest, in England
- 28 State
- 29 Ireland
- 30 Aa
- 31 Mistake
- 32 Plastic spat
- 34 Dull sound
- 37 Tobago neighbor
- 38 Made cloth
- 40 Tribe
- 41 Alluring
- 43 German art
- 44 Wage
- 46 Principle
- 47 Concept
- 48 Repeat
- 49 Plateau
- 50 Japanese aborigine
- 51 Labels
- 53 And others: abbr.
- 54 Fable
- 57 Borzoi

Peanuts

HERE'S THE WORLD WAR I FLYING ACE HOME ON LEAVE..

IT'S NICE TO BE BACK AMONG OLD FRIENDS WHERE YOU'RE APPRECIATED..

PLEASE TAKE YOUR ROOT BEER GLASS OFF MY PIANO..

Andy Capp

WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT HIM ALL EVENING. MUM, COULD WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT?

YOU'RE REALLY SLOW WHEN YOU DOWN. YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT HIM ALL EVENING. MUM, COULD WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT?

Mutt'n'Jeff

HEY, WAITER, HEY!

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST I EAT? DO YOU THINK OYSTERS ARE HEALTHY?

I NEVER HEARD ONE COMPLAIN. SIR, HAVE YOU?

OH, I GUESS I'LL HAVE POACHED EGGS ON TOAST! THIS LOOKS LIKE SCRAMBLED EGGS!

WAITER, I ASKED FOR POACHED EGGS ON TOAST! THIS LOOKS LIKE SCRAMBLED EGGS!

YOU ASKED FOR POACHED EGGS ON TOAST AND STEP ON IT!

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

THIS lipstick will put the spark back into your marriage. It's 10% gunpowder.

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HAFT

OCTIX

YARPTS

UNSOIC

Answer: A

Yesterday's Jumble: METAL KAPOK UNCURL JETNEY

Answer: How he felt before his first sky dive —

Jordan Rocks turns out a

THE JORDAN ROCKWELL Company generated JD41,160,000 last year but the amount was halved this year because of the red. The firm's net profit was JD4,160,000 in 1997, a 50 per cent drop from JD8,320,000 in 1996. The firm's net profit was JD4,160,000 in 1997, a 50 per cent drop from JD8,320,000 in 1996. The firm's net profit was JD4,160,000 in 1997, a 50 per cent drop from JD8,320,000 in 1996.

Vehicles tops

IRAQI TRUCKS WERE THE MOST COMMON VEHICLES IN THE JORDANIAN ARMY, according to a report by the Jordanian Ministry of Defense. The report said that the Iraqi trucks were used for transporting supplies and equipment to the front lines.

REUTERS

The Busine

Major Currencies & Cr

Currency	USD	DEM	£
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9360	0.6933
DE Mark	0.5063	1.0000	0.3436
GB Sterling	0.6933	1.3593	1.0000
CH Franc	0.6758	1.3593	0.8456
JP Yen	0.0073	1.0000	0.0036
CA Dollar	0.6933	1.3593	0.8456
IT Lira	0.0005	1.9360	0.0019
NL Guilder	0.0025	1.9360	0.0010
FR Franc	0.1666	0.2000	0.0833

Energy

Currency	USD	DEM	£
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9360	0.6933
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	2.7500	0.9300
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.5166	0.1777
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	5.1666	1.7777
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.5333	0.1851
Kuwait Dinar	0.2773	0.5333	0.1851
UAE Dirham	0.2773	0.5333	0.1851
Yemen Rial	0.2773	0.5333	0.1851
Egyptian Pound	0.2500	0.4861	0.1666

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Energy

Commodity	Last	High	Low
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25
Crude (bbl)	137.25	137.25	137.25

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Rockwool Industries Company turns out a slight profit after '96 loss

THE JORDAN Rockwool Industries Company generated JD411,600 gross profit last year but the amount was barely enough to lift the firm out of the red. The company, which posted JD1.48 million in sales in 1997 (JD1.13 million in 1996), recorded a JD5,140 net profit compared to a JD113,300 loss registered in 1996.

Board Chairman Ibrahim Abu Hileh told the general assembly the company had to face many difficulties and obstacles during last year as a result of the economic recession which affected various activities in Jordan and the region. He indicated that despite striving to market the firm's products to traditional markets and new markets, the company was not able to achieve the hoped for results.

Mr. Abu Hileh said the JRIC management has decided to temporarily freeze the development of the plant, which was started at the

end of 1993, until the completion of setting up a rockwool factory in Egypt. The project in Egypt is expected to become operational during the second half of 1999.

The chairman explained that by establishing a partnership in Egypt, the JRIC aims at maintaining the most important export market and increasing the company's share of the rockwool product in the Egyptian market. "Increasing the sales in Egypt will reflect positively on the results of the company," Mr. Abu Hileh emphasised. "After starting the operations (in Egypt), work will begin on the necessary expansion of the company's plants."

According to the annual report, the company produced/sold a total of 2,417 tonnes of rockwool. The balance sheet at the end of last year totalled JD3.54 million and the shareholders' equity was close to JD3.4 million (Al Aswaq).

Vehicles tops list of Jordan's imports

IRAQ TOPPED a list of 12 Arab countries in trade with Jordan in 1997, with its imports valued at \$200 million and exports at \$512 million. According to a study, Iraq moved up the list, pushing Saudi Arabia from first to second. Trade with Saudi Arabia amounted to \$345 million, it said. The study did not say what commodities were traded with Iraq. But it is known that Jordan exports food and medicine to Baghdad in return for oil — a deal approved by the United Nations and exempt from sanctions imposed on Iraq

in 1990. Among non-Arab countries, India was the largest recipient of Jordanian products — at \$137 million in 1997, the study said. Of non-Arab countries, Germany exported the most — \$410 million in 1997. The United States was second at \$387 million. The study said total Jordanian exports in 1997 nudged up by 2.5 per cent to \$1.5 billion, while imports declined by 4.6 per cent to \$4.1 billion. Phosphate ranked first among Jordanian exports, while vehicles were the largest imported items.

Millennium bug to slow world growth — ING Barings

AMSTERDAM (R) — The millennium bug is expected to put a brake on the global economy, with stock markets feeling the shock from 1999 onwards, researchers at Dutch financial group ING Barings has said.

"We want to be sure that everybody gets convinced of this matter, without causing any panic," ING Barings chief strategist Philip Menco told a news conference.

He said the problems caused by the inability of many computers to cope with 21st century dates were likely to reduce worldwide exports and growth by two per cent in 2000.

"Worldwide trade will fall (due to the millennium bug) and so will Dutch exports," he said.

ING is advising its investors to start overweighing bonds in their investment portfolios and underweighting stocks from 1999 in view of the millennium bug.

Early in 2000, when inflation is expected to start accelerating, investors should reduce the proportion of bonds in favour of stocks.

Even though some countries like the Netherlands were relatively well prepared, companies were likely to be hit by problems in other countries.

"There are a number of countries where there's very little money available...or where the government is hardly interested in (solving) the problem," Mr. Menco said.

Mr. Menco said a drop in worldwide industrial output seemed unavoidable. ING Barings foresees some problems in the banking sector.

"Most banks will be millennium-proof, except for some — think of the Far East," Mr. Menco said, warning of a domino effect. ING Barings recommends an underweight stance in the Far East in 2000 and advises investors to be selective in their European portfolios.

ING Barings also released a study on whether the 51 biggest listed Dutch companies were ready to face the millennium.

According to the study the Netherlands is better prepared than France, Belgium and Germany, with the Dutch lagging only the United States and Canada.

"We think it will take some 12 months before (world) stock and bond markets will discount the millennium," Mr. Menco said. "Being an investor, one has to anticipate that, otherwise we'll all want to get out through the same doorway."

In the Netherlands, ING Barings expects profit growth of domestic firms surveyed to be reduced by some 5.3 per cent in 2000 due to millennium-linked problems.

Inflation will be boosted by 0.3 per cent, the public deficit by 0.6 per cent and national income cut by some 1.1 per cent in 2000 compared to normal circumstances, Mr. Menco said.

Exports are seen down 3.5 per cent and imports by two per cent.

But there will also be winners. Dutch Information Technology (IT) service providers, temporary employment agencies and consultancy firms were set to see earnings rise due to the millennium bug.

Profit growth would be cut by less than one per cent in the health sector, among hotels and restaurants, other service-providing companies and trading firms.

But primary manufacturers, some firms in the food and drinks industry and capital goods producers would be confronted with a major slowdown in profit growth, Mr. Menco added.

Tourism slump continues in Israel, hoteliers say

TEL AVIV (R) — Tourism to Israel is still deep in a slump that started with Palestinian suicide bombings two years ago, an Israel hotel associations official said on Monday.

"We hope it will be better this summer, but we don't see an end to the crisis that began in 1996," said Pinna Ben David, an economist for the association.

"Tourists don't like to come to a place where they don't feel safe, where they see negative things happening," she told reporters.

Releasing figures for the first four months of the year, the Central Bureau of Statistics put average hotel occupancy at 52.8 per cent compared with 59.3 per cent for the same period in 1997 and 67.7 per cent two years ago.

The number of tourists entering Israel in the first three months of 1998 was 441,000, compared with 528,100 for the same period last year and 623,300 in the first quarter of 1996, according to recent tourism

ministry figures.

Tourism to Israel had been rising by an average of 12 per cent a year since the signing in 1993 of an interim peace deal with the Palestinians until militants launched a wave of bombings that killed more than 60 people in 1996.

At an entrance to Jerusalem's Old City, Palestinian Khalil Shreim looked for tourists to bring to his shop.

"Every year it seems like tourism is down, but especially in the last two years, since (Israeli Prime Minister) Netanyahu came to power," he said.

U.S. mediation has failed to break a deadlock between Israel and the Palestinians over Israeli settlement-building and the handover of more West Bank land to the Palestinians in return for stronger measures against militants.

But international hotel chains in Israel are hoping for a tourism upturn as the millennium approaches,

said Abraham Rosenthal, director general of the Israel Hotels Association.

He expects the Holy Land, with its many Biblical sites, will be a popular destination for Christian visitors marking the 2,000th birthday of Jesus.

Mr. Rosenthal estimated that as many as 4.5 million tourists could visit in the year 2000, double the current annual average of 2.2 million.

He said some 20 international hotel chains had either begun or expanded operations in Israel since 1990.

"They are investing in the long-term, not in the short-term," said Mr. Rosenthal, noting that it can take five or six years to build a hotel.

"With the year 2000 coming up, they hope that things will change soon," he said. "Israel, in a time of stability, is one of the most attractive destinations in the world."

UAE lends Syria \$100 million for telephone expansion

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has agreed to extend a \$100 million loan to Syria to finance the expansion of its telephone network, the official UAE and Syrian news agencies reported.

The loan from the Abu Dhabi Development Fund (ADDF) carries an interest rate of three per cent plus 0.5 per cent for administra-

tive services and is repayable after 20 years, including a five-year grace period, the UAE news agency WAM said.

The Syrian news agency SANA said the funds would be used to install 1.65 million new telephone lines in Syria, taking the total number of lines in the country to 3.3 million by the year 2001, or 14 for every 100

inhabitants. The UAE is one of the biggest aid donors to Syria along with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The three oil-rich Gulf countries have pledged more assistance to Syria and Egypt within an eight-year-old alliance known as the Damascus Declaration, which also includes Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7650	0.6146	1.4711	137.48	1.4483	1741.70	1.3601	6.3240
DE Mark	0.5686	1.0000	0.3479	0.8330	77.55	0.8209	985.51	1.289	3.3525
GB Sterling	1.6270	2.8754	1.0000	2.3946	223.29	2.3580	283.76	3.2395	9.6383
CH Franc	0.6798	118.96	0.4171	1.0000	93.18	0.8845	1182.58	135.19	4.0223
JP Yen	0.0073	1.2862	0.4478	1.0720	1.0000	1.0891	12.69	144.95	4.3139
CA Dollar	0.6900	1.2916	0.4225	1.0968	1.06	1.0790	1270.80	1.4551	4.5285
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0431	0.3528	0.8844	1273.29	0.8319	1.0000	11.42	3.3980
NL Guilder	0.6025	1.0571	0.3087	0.7396	68.52	0.7284	875.40	1.0000	2.9755
FR Franc	0.1688	0.2981	0.1037	0.24565	23.15	0.2448	33.59	0.0000	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LEB	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.6385	0.3087	3.6728	1513.00	3.4144
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2898	0.5317	5.1319	0.4312	5.1803	2133.99	4.8189
Saudi Riyal	0.2686	0.1890	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0815	0.98	403.41	0.9104
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8808	9.9491	1.0000	9.65	0.8109	9.74	4013.58	9.0577
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1949	1.0308	1.0308	1.0000	0.8040	1.01	415.53	0.9384
Kuwait Dinar	3.2713	2.3193	12.2890	12.332	11.90	12.01	12.01	4949.46	0.9384
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0208	0.9907	0.0832	1.00	411.95	0.9297
Lebanese 1000	0.58	0.4688	2.4788	0.2492	2.4048	0.2020	2.4275	1.0000	2.2568
Egyptian	0.2929	0.2076	1.0984	0.1104	1.0658	0.0895	1.0758	443.11	1.0000

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	14.37	14.33
W. Texas	14.76	14.11
Bonny	14.37	14.33
Dubai	12.40	12.29
UL Gas	146.00	146.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4707	0.16388	0.39251	36.5898
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4807	0.16736	0.40082	37.3636
KW Dinar	3.2713	5.77701	2.01048	4.81484	48.8333
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.88384	1.63052	3.90472	384.033
CY Pound	1.9159	3.394	1.1777	2.8205	263.015

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	299.5	300
Silver (oz's)	5.27	5.31
Platinum (oz's)	380	383
AL (3 Months)	1403	1406
CU (3 Months)	1693	1696
Zinc (3 Months)	1072	1075
Lead (3 Months)	570	573
Ni (3 Months)	4890	4910

Libor Fixing

Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-12-
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.5641	5.7344	5.8125	5.9531
GBP	7.4219	7.5104	7.5156	7.5104
JPY	0.6729	0.6250	0.5867	0.5979
DEM	3.6093	3.7029	3.8280	4.0390
FRF	3.5313	1.8750	1.9792	2.1042
CHF	1.8333	3.6938	3.8875	3.8219
ITL	6.5540	6.1710	4.8470	4.8470

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	137.25	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1977	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	286.5	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	94.4	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	27.42	Spot
Tea (kg/kg)	120	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	410	Spot

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1631	1.1689
DE Mark	0.402	0.404
CH Franc	0.4833	0.4887
FR Franc	0.12	0.1206
JP Yen	0.6206	0.6232
NL Guilder	0.3669	0.3687
IT Lira	0.4082	0.4102

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Africa reportedly attracted \$5.28b in 1997 investment

BLANTYRE (AFP) — Africa attracted direct foreign investment worth \$5.28 billion in 1997, the head of the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank has said.

Bank President Martin Ogang, whose institution is the financial wing of the 21-member Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), said this was far below the sums attracted by some individual states.

He gave the example of China, which he said won \$42 billion in foreign investment last year. Mr. Ogang was speaking in the Malawian capital Blantyre at the start of the 14th annual meeting of the bank's board of governors.

He said Africa's share of global foreign direct investment continued to slide, adding that without security and political stability no investor would commit funds to any country.

Mr. Ogang said the economic prospects for the region were bright because of the broadening of reforms which were already having a positive impact.

He said the number of sub-Saharan economies which grew by more than three per cent jumped from 17 in 1992 to 35 last year.

The meeting ratified Egypt's entry into bank membership by the end of 1998, which Mr. Ogang said was a genuine contribution to achieving African economic integration.

The bank wants to open its membership to non-COMESA countries to expand its capital base and resources.

COMESA groups Burundi, Comoros, Angola, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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Lama making a late run

PARIS (AFP) — For a long while it seemed as if flamboyant goalkeeper Bernard Lama would miss out on France's bid to win the 1998 World Cup on home soil.

Lama was suspended for six months last year after he tested positive for marijuana and his career took a nosedive.

His club, Paris St Germain, washed their hands of him and he spent several months in limbo — ignored by French coach Aimé Jacquet — until English Premier League club West Ham gave him the chance to reignite his career.

At first Lama was frustrated at West Ham, where he began as second choice to Canadian Craig Forrest, but he soon established himself as the No.1 keeper at the club with a series of commanding performances.

After apparently falling behind the erratic Fabien Barthez, Lionel Charbonnier and even Lionel Letizi in the French pecking order, Lama was recalled to the French squad for a recent friendly against Russia.

Barthez still started the game, but Lama's recent performances — including starting in a friendly against Sweden — means he could be first-choice at the finals and be given the chance to add further to the 35 international caps he won before his slump.

Of Guyanese parentage, Lama was born in Saint Symphorien, outside Tours, in April 1963, but grew up in Guyana, where he

starred for USL Montjoly Cayenne. He played for Lille, Metz, Brest and Lens before joining PSG, where he developed into a goalkeeper of the highest calibre. He has played 380 French first division games and was French Player of the Year in 1994.

Lama's strength is making goalkeeping look easy. While he can be dramatic at times, he does all the basics well — and PSG this season suffered from failing to adequately replace him.

He was a key player when the club from the French capital won the 1994 League title and the 1996 European Cup Winners' Cup.

He made his national team debut in 1993 — in a 3-0 win over Israel — and was an automatic choice until his drug test results. He is currently being linked with a move back to the French capital.

Lama is a player who thrives in the limelight and he recently launched his own Internet site (www.bernardlama.com) to keep fans up to date with his activities and those of the French team in the lead-up to the World Cup finals.

"I like the thought that I can get my own ideas over to the fans, without them being interpreted by an intermediary," he said.



Lothar Matthäus (C) of the German national soccer team heads a ball during a practice session at the training camp of the German team in Helsinki. Matthäus, captain of the World cup-winning side of 1990, has been dramatically drafted into the German squad for France 98 (Reuters photo)

Di Matteo ready to quit Chelsea

COVERCIANO (AFP) — Chelsea midfielder Roberto Di Matteo has admitted he would jump at the chance to return to the Italian Serie A.

Di Matteo, currently with Italy's World Cup squad, said he is not unhappy at Chelsea. But the former Lazio star sent a clear message to the transfer wheel-dealers of the Serie A: "come and get me."

"I'm happy with things from all points of view in London," he said.

"But if the chance came to return to Italy I certainly wouldn't turn it down. It all depends on Chelsea, rather than me, since I've got a contract with them until June 2002."

Di Matteo, who turns 28 on Friday, was linked last year with a move to Juventus but more recently the talk is of a possible return to Lazio under boss Sergio Cragnotti.

"There is talk about this (Lazio) going around, but I can certainly deny that. I've had a meeting with Cragnotti. I never saw him while I was in London, even though the club still have a big place in my heart."

He went on: "My prospects with Chelsea are good — we've won three major trophies in two years and next season we'll be back in the European Cup Winners' Cup and we play Real Madrid for the European Super Cup."

But he added: "Should Chelsea ever decide to let me on the transfer list — I would come back to Italy straight away."

One thing which has changed recently in west London is his relationship with fellow Italian Gianluca Vialli, now Chelsea's coach as well as player.

"I don't know what Vialli's plans are, but we get on well together," he told the Corriere dello Sport. "But I don't see him in our spare time anymore, not since he became coach. That wouldn't be right."

After three years with Lazio, Di Matteo left the club under a cloud in 1996 after falling out with then coach Zdenek Zeman.

His return could depend on the outcome of Yugoslav midfielder Vladimir Jugovic's current talks with Spanish club Atletico Madrid.

Kopke finally out of the shadows

PARIS (AFP) — Andreas Kopke had to sit a long time in the shadow of his predecessor Bodo Illgner before getting a chance to show his stuff.

Although of equal ability, he could not buck the pecking order. Kopke sat patiently on the bench when Germany celebrated World Cup glory in Rome in 1990 but then was justified after Germany was painfully beaten by Bulgaria at only the quarter final stage four years later.

Amid the recriminations, Berti Vogts admitted his one mistake of the U.S. tournament was to put Illgner and not Kopke in goal.

Since that day Kopke has been Germany's undisputed number one. He is the only man Vogts has guaranteed a place in the side this World Cup.

It is Kopke's quiet assurance on the goal line which lends Germany's defensive unit such an unbreachable aura. He is a quiet person who shies away from the limelight, preferring others to do the post-match talking.

At Euro 96, the European championships in England, he was the man of tournament and led Germany to victory with a solid display of no-fuss keeping.

It is also largely due to him that French club Olympique Marseilles have turned themselves around since coming back from scandal and near financial ruin under the presidency of corrupt former French government minister Bernard Tapie.

Kopke plans to hang up his gloves after this World Cup, although he stays on with Marseille at club level.

Germany already have a



Andreas Kopke, goalkeeper of the German national soccer team, jumps for the ball during a practice session at the training camp of the German team in Helsinki. The German national soccer team is staying in Helsinki for a 10-day training camp to prepare for the soccer World Cup in France (Reuters photo)

new number 1 waiting in the wings in the form of Bayern Munich's Oliver Kahn. He will be on the bench as a reserve in France but, like Kopke before him, is obey-

ing the German goalkeeper credo of silently biding his time.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

U.S. blanks Kuwait 2-0

PORTLAND (AFP) — Ernie Stewart and Tab Ramos scored to give the United States a 2-0 triumph over Kuwait here Sunday in the hosts' penultimate tuneup match for the World Cup. Until Ramos' goal in the 82nd minute sealed the victory, the one-goal margin created by Stewart in the 38th minute disguised the dominance of the U.S. team, which outshot Kuwait 14-0 in the first half. Ramos, in only his second match since recovering from a torn left knee ligament, entered the game as a substitute for Brian Maçonneuve in the 75th minute. The United States improved to 6-3-2 in international matches in 1998 and has a four-match unbeaten streak, 2-0 with two drawn, following a three-match losing streak. The U.S. team opens World Cup play June 15 in Paris against Germany. The Americans' final tuneup for France comes Saturday in Washington against Scotland, which played Colombia to a 2-2 draw last Saturday.

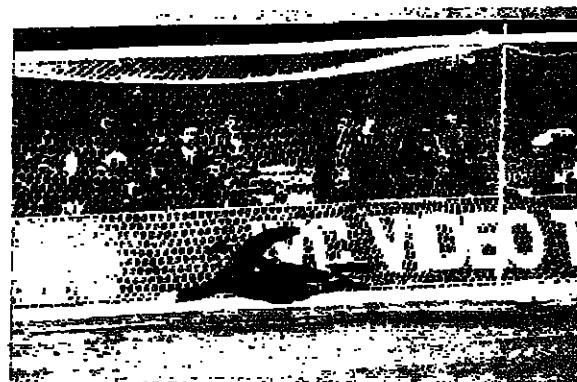
Defensive blunders expose Chile

SANTIAGO (AFP) — Chile let slip a two-goal lead to be held 2-2 by 10-man Uruguay in a World Cup warm-up match here Sunday. Ivan Zamorano and Marcelo Salas gave Chile a bright start with two goals inside 24 minutes but Uruguayan substitute Nicolas Olivera pulled one back from the penalty spot in the 62nd minute and Marcelo Zalayeta struck the equaliser nine minutes from time. Chile were expected to coast home when Uruguayan midfielder Federico Magallanes was ordered off in the 54th minute but their defensive blunders allowed Uruguay to force a draw. Olivera forced Pedro Reyes into giving away the penalty and then pounced on a wayward pass from Javier Margas to put Zalayeta through for the equaliser. Chile fly to France Thursday. They play Tunisia in Montelimar on May 31 and Morocco in Avignon on June 4 in their final warm-up matches. Chile face Italy, Austria and Cameroon in their opening round group in the World Cup and open against Italy on Thursday, June 11, at Bordeaux.

World Cup countdown with Franz Beckenbauer

Are you a World Cup expert? Then let me challenge you

What's wrong here?



10) The history of the World Cup started in Uruguay 68 years ago, in 1930.

Nowadays the first day of the World Cup is marked by grand and colourful festivities, but in those days things were very different. The tournament in 1930 brought together the "supposedly" best teams in the world at that time — "supposedly" because many of the important teams such as England, Spain, Italy, Austria or Germany, were absent.

The competition kicked off with two matches on the same day, the 13th of July: France versus Mexico (4-1) and United States versus Belgium (3-0). However, official inauguration took place five days later. Why?

10) The decisive scene in the World Cup final 1990 in Italy. It is the game between Argentina and Germany, my team, in a replay of the previous final match in Mexico 1986 and the score is 0-0, with five minutes to play. Andreas Brehme boots a sublime free kick, the ball whacks first one goalpost and bounces in off the other, exactly opposite to where Argentinian goalie Sergio Goycochea is at full stretch. It was the winning goal, 1-0 was the final score, making it the third World Cup victory for Germany and the second for me, my first one being 1974 as a player.

Facts and figures about the participating countries

ENGLAND

130,423 sq km Capital London
Population 48,903,460 — 375.0 per sq km
Principal language: English
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 18,780. — (UK)

Participation in World Cup championships:



FRANCE

543,965 sq km Capital Paris
Population 58,143,000 — 106.9 per sq km
Principal language: French
Annual GNP per capita: US\$ 22,470. — (1994)

Participation in World Cup championships:



Solve the country contest daily to find the phrase at the end of Beckenbauer's World Cup countdown

10) There is no shortage of water or coastline here, which allows the royal family the opportunity to own a luxury yacht, with which they visit the provinces. But only in summer — the winters would be too cold and stormy.

The inhabitants of the country regard themselves as rebellious, but they are, almost without exception, loyal to the head of the royal family, forgiving such naughtiness as too much smoking. Should they feel worried about invasion by their larger neighbours or think they are coming off second best as a small country, then they simply refuse obedience, for example, by referendum.

On the other hand, the last time an occupying force invaded, the country offered no military resistance. Revolutions here have restricted themselves to an attempt at a sexual one, the successes of which, once visible all over the capital, are no longer much in evidence. The country's main export article has a wiggly tail and its best known author had a disposition towards fairy tales.

The phrase we are looking for offers a rather precise, though harsh definition of an ability considered indispensable in the world of diplomats.

Please fill in the respective letters in the corresponding positions:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39
40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50
51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64
65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74

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Solution:

Please enter the letters of the country as instructed in the solution squares as follows:

First letter of the country in position 1.
Second letter in position 50.

ANSWERS

CHALLENGE QUIZ

9) Spain. After the 1956 Hungarian uprising, Puskas went into exile, signed up for Real Madrid and secured Spanish nationality. He was recently bestowed the honour of being "the best goalscorer of the century" by a private institute, the International Federation for Football History and Statistics. But Puskas, or "Canoncito Pum" as he was nicknamed, never scored a single goal for Spain in Chile. In the World Cup in Switzerland

he scored four for Hungary, including the first one in the final match. However, Germany went on to win 3-2.

COUNTRY CONTEST

9) Yugoslavia

PHOTO CONTEST

9) There is a mistake in the caption. France have never contested any final whatsoever. Their best showing was two third places achieved in 1958 in Sweden and 1986 in Mexico.

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	Hisham Yanes Theatre
	Bruce Willis & Richard Gere ... in	Jim Carry ... in	The biggest cinema production	CONCORD '1'	ABDOUN	ABDOUN	STARTING APRIL 6TH
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	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:00, 3:30, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	& still showing at 8:30 p.m.	We're Jordanian
			ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI	KAMANANA			Starring Hisham Yanes, Amal Dabbas, Rania Kurdi and the group
							at 8:30 p.m.
							For reservations call: 4640155, 4625135

Crown Prince re

AMMAN, Jordan — The Royal Hashemite Jordanian National Guard (RJNG) has announced that the Crown Prince, Prince Hassan bin Talal, will visit the country on a tour of inspection, which will include a visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Amman to host League Cham

By Roufan Nahhas
Amman, Jordan Times

AMMAN, Jordan — The Jordanian Football Federation (JFF) has announced that the 1998 Jordanian League Championship will be held in Amman from October 1 to October 15.

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azz sweep past

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Crown Prince receives taekwondo team

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday received members of Jordan's national taekwondo team and congratulated them on their performance at the 13th Asian Taekwondo Championships, which concluded in Vietnam last week.

The team returned with two silver and four bronze medals, with the men's team taking third place and the women 9th among 21 competing countries.

Prince Hassan expressed pride in the player's impressive achievement and

stressed the importance of serious training in preparation for the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The Crown Prince called for overcoming all difficulties hindering participation in Sydney.

The meeting was attended by Major General Tahseen Shurdum, president of the Jordan Taekwondo Federation and the federation's board members.

Following lunch, Prince Hassan presented the team members with gifts in appreciation of their performance.

Amman to host Asian Handball League Champions Tournament

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Asian Handball Federation has given its Jordanian counterpart the green light to host the First Asian Handball League Champions Tournament in Amman from October 20-30.

"We are happy to host the event as it gives us the chance to get the experience and exposure we are looking for," Jordan Handball Federation (JHF) President Dr. Sari Hamdan told the Jordan Times.

He said eight teams were expected to take part in the event, divided into two groups.

Hamdan pointed out that hosting such an event should be beneficial for the game and the country.

"The team's accommodation expenses are covered by the Asian Federation and we take care of arranging technicalities."

"Hosting such championships can enrich our knowledge of the game and gain the experience we need," he said.

"Due to the lack of financing we are not able to go abroad, so hosting them here is undoubtedly useful," Hamdan added.

"Besides the experience, we will try to gain some extra income from TV rights and advertisements," he said.

On the national front, the JHF began preparing the national teams in February with a busy schedule ahead.

"We have a busy agenda for both the men's and women's teams," he added.

He said several friendly matches against neighbouring countries were on schedule including some against the Syrian team in June. The men's Premier League will also kick off in June and July.

"Finally we have to be ready for the Pan-Arab Games which will be held here in 1999," Hamdan pointed out.

And on the women's frontier.

"We have also taken care of the women's team, with several training camps here and abroad," he added.

"The teams are looking forward for the next Pan-Arab Games and the Arab Handball Championship for Women in September," he said.

Jordan's handball team did not take part in the last Pan-Arab Games which were held in Beirut in July 1997 as handball was not among the competition events.

Jazz sweep past Lakers into finals

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Karl Malone and the Utah Jazz swept their way into the National Basketball Association Finals at the expense of Shaquille O'Neal and the Los Angeles Lakers.

Now the NBA regular-season champions will take home court advantage into the best-of-seven championship series and try winning their first NBA title, maybe by taking the broom to Michael Jordan or Reggie Miller.

Malone scored 32 points, pulled down 14 rebounds and passed out five assists to spark the Jazz past the Lakers 96-92 here Sunday and complete a four-game sweep of the Western Conference final.

The Jazz must wait to see which rival survives the Eastern Conference final, Chicago or Indiana, and how long the series goes to know when it will host game one. The finals open May 31 or June 3 in Salt Lake City.

Reigning champion Chicago, seeking a sixth title in eight years behind NBA Most Valuable Player and scoring leader Jordan, owns a 2-1 lead over the Pacers with game four Monday in Indianapolis.

"There is going to be a lot to it," Malone said of the final. "But now the most important thing is to protect our home court."

Utah won the home court edge by matching

Chicago for the NBA's best record at 62-20 and beating the Bulls in both their regular season games.

Once again O'Neal was potent in defeat, scoring 38 points but finding himself helpless to stop the Jazz from eliminating the Lakers for the second year in a row. The Jazz beat the Lakers in five games last year.

Utah never trailed after the first 10 minutes. Malone scored 10 points in the last 7 1/2 minutes, answering every belated surge by the Lakers.

"Everybody hung in there and did the job they were capable of doing," Malone said.

O'Neal made 14-of-24 from the field and 10-of-18 from the free throw line. But he missed a pair of free throws with 27 seconds to play that could have cut the deficit to one point.

O'Neal was swept out for the fourth time in the past five years. With Orlando he was swept out in the first round in 1994, the 1995 finals and the Eastern Conference finals in 1996.

The Jazz recorded its first playoff sweep in club history. The Lakers were swept for the first time since Detroit blanked them in the 1989 NBA finals.

Jeff Hornacek scored 15 points and Greg Ostertag added 11 for the Jazz.

Blatter gains ground on Johansson in Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — The battle between FIFA presidency candidates Sepp Blatter and Lennart Johansson for African votes appears balanced on a knife edge this week.

Johansson, the president of European governing body UEFA, has the backing of the African Football Confederation (CAF), but

informed sources say up to half of the 42 members who can vote on June 8 may support his rival.

Blatter, on leave from his role as secretary-general of world governing organisation FIFA, made a whirlwind tour of the continent last week, visiting Johannesburg and Nairobi.

South Africa is expected to vote for Blatter because he supports its campaign to stage the 2006 World Cup finals while Johansson favours previous hosts Germany.

Blatter had considerable success in Kenya where the 10-nation Confederation of East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA) said they would side with the former Swiss army colonel.

This move comes after CECAFA officials were flown to CAF headquarters in Cairo last month and urged to support Johansson, whose delegation for a tour of Asia this month included Africa president Issa Hayatou from Cameroon.

Blatter spokesman Emmanuel Maradas told AFP

from Switzerland that he expected about 20 nations to support the right-hand man of outgoing FIFA president Joao Havelange, a Brazilian octogenarian.

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French Open

Hingis through as Rusedski crashes out

PARIS (AFP) — Women's title favourite Martina Hingis survived early nerves to come safely through her first-round test at the French Open Monday — but Britain's world number-four Greg Rusedski was once again left heading for the nearest exit after crashing out in straight-sets.

The 17-year-old Hingis, beaten in last year's final by Iva Majoli of Croatia, defeated Spain's 65th ranked Maria Sanchez Lorenzo on the centre-court 6-2, 6-1.

But Rusedski, unable to adapt his big 'serve-and-volley' style to the deadly slow red clay surface, was clearly disappointed after going down 4-6, 4-6, 4-6 to Belgian Davis Cup player Johan Van Herck. He has now won only three matches in four visits to Roland Garros.

Hingis opened against Sanchez Lorenzo by dropping her serve but once she had broken back and surged 4-2 clear she never looked back and her 19-year-old

place to No. 4 in the latest world rankings published today said: "Obviously this is not the way I wanted to celebrate moving up in the rankings."

"I thought I played pretty well for six games but then things didn't work out," Rusedski said he would probably stay on in the French capital for another day to "pick up his washing" and said that he would come back next year.

"I can only do better than I did this year," he said, adding with the famous ear-to-ear grin: "At least I made somebody very happy."

He was referring to Van Herck, the world's 97th ranked player who celebrated his 24th birthday on Sunday.

Rusedski was not the only men's seed to fall at the first hurdle. Ninth seed Karol Kucera of Slovakia was beaten 1-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-3 by Australian Todd Woodbridge.

In other men's singles matches, Spain's twelfth-



Greg Rusedski of Great Britain returns a shot to Johan Van Herck of Belgium during their match on the first day of the French Open (Reuters photo)



Marcelo Rios of Chile stretches for a backhand during his match against Brett Steven of New Zealand on the first day of the French Tennis Open at Roland Garros stadium (Reuters photo)

opponent from Barcelona won only one more game in the 49-minute encounter.

"I felt pretty good out there and I think I played well," said the 17-year-old world number-one who narrowly missed chalking up a historic 'Grand Slam' last year when she was beaten in Paris (she went on to win the Australian Open, Wimbledon and the United States Open).

Hingis now plays Meike Babel of Germany, who beat Yuka Yoshida of Japan 6-1, 6-0.

Rusedski, who jumped a

seed Carlos Moya overwhelmed France's 19-year-old former world junior champion Sebastien Grosjean 7-5, 6-1, 6-4.

Moya, 21, the Australian Open finalist in 1997, has never got further than the third-round in two previous visits. But he should improve on that when he plays either compatriot qualifier Pepe Imaz or another French wildcard entry Jean-Baptiste Perlant in the next round.

Magnus Norman of Sweden, who put out world number-one Pete Sampras in

the third round here last year, won his first-round by defeating Bernd Karbacher of Germany 6-2, 1-6, 6-3, 6-1 and Paris-based South African Wayne Ferreira also went through when he scored a 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, 7-5 win over German Martin Sinner.

Australian Scott Draper beat Tomas Nydahl of

Sweden 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 and Belgian qualifier Christophe Van Gasse defeated Marcelo Craca of Germany 6-1, 6-1, 6-1.

Top American teenager Venus Williams, who is drawn to face Hingis in the quarter-finals, stormed past Thailand's Tamarine



Martina Hingis of Switzerland plays a forehand during her match against Maria Anto Sanchez-Lorenzo of Spain (Reuters photo)

Tanasugarn 6-3, 6-1 and now plays Japan's number-one Ai Sugiyama.

Sugiyama beat Laura Golarsa of Italy 7-5, 6-3.

Another Japanese player to score a surprise win was 22-year-old Miho Saeki who put out French Fed Cup player Sarah Pitkowski 7-5, 7-5.

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